

A Chūshingura Palimpsest

Young Motoori Norinaga Hears the Story of the Akō Rōnin from a Buddhist Priest

FEDERICO MARCON AND HENRY D. SMITH II

IN 1744 the famous thinker was not yet known as Motoori Norinaga 本居宣長 (1730–1801); he was simply a fourteen-year-old named Yashirō 弥四郎 of the Ozu 小津 family of merchants. That autumn he happened to attend a series of sermons given at Jukyōji 樹敬寺, a Jōdo temple in his native town of Matsusaka 松坂, Ise province. The preacher was a priest from Edo, a certain Jitsudō 実道. Jitsudō, of whom nothing is known apart from what Norinaga tells us, seems to have been one of those priests who traveled around the country reciting sermons that combined a dose of Buddhist teachings with stories or legends intended to draw in and entertain the audience.¹ On this occasion, the young Yashirō proceeded to transcribe the tale Jitsudō related. As he explains at the beginning of the manuscript:

I am writing down, just as my foolish ears heard it, the story told by the priest Jitsudō 実道 during a series of sermons at Jukyōji 樹敬寺 temple from the ninth month of Enkyō 延享 1 [1744], about how the retainers of Asano Takumi no kami Naganori 浅野内匠頭長[矩], lord of Ako castle in the province of Harima,² took revenge on the enemy of their master under the leadership of Ōishi Kuranosuke Fujiwara no Yoshio 大いしくらの介藤原のよしを [大石内蔵助藤原良雄].³

Norinaga's manuscript was first published in 1975, but it has received only cursory attention from scholars of the Akō 赤穂 incident and biographers of Norinaga.⁴ Much more should be done, since the manuscript is of great interest

FEDERICO MARCON is a Ph.D. candidate in Japanese history at Columbia University. Henry D. Smith II is professor of Japanese history at the same institution. This is the fourth in a series of five articles on various dimensions of Chūshingura.

¹ For the history of sermon literature, see Sekiyama 1992.

² The name of the domain, 赤穂, is usually pronounced Akō. Norinaga, however, consistently indicates a pronunciation of Ako. In this article we will use the conventional pronunciation, but will follow Norinaga's rendering in translations from his text.

³ *Akō gishi den*, p. 585.

⁴ Tanabe 1999 provides the only published commentary on the Norinaga manuscript; it consists mostly of a reprint of the text itself, with interspersed observations. Brief mention of

for what it reveals about both the evolution of the story of the Forty-Seven Rōnin and the history of oral performances in the Tokugawa period. Written reports of such performances are extremely rare prior to the introduction of shorthand transcription in the Meiji period. Although Norinaga's account, as we shall see, is far from an exact transcription, it provides at least a general sense of the content and form of the narrative at hand. It also offers an opportunity to consider the way in which meaning is produced by successive superimpositions and interactions among different types of texts. By looking at the way in which one preacher's account, as recorded by Norinaga, relates to surviving earlier accounts, ideally it should be possible to uncover, one by one, the texts that lie hidden within Norinaga's manuscript. Simultaneously we should be able to trace the ways in which the deeds of the Akō rōnin were transformed as they were recounted in a succession of texts, oral and written.

In his manuscript, young Yashirō claims to record a story told orally by the priest Jitsudō. While Norinaga's manuscript is the only text on which we can work directly, it necessarily implies the oral text of Jitsudō's performance, which may be designated as an "implied text," "secondary text," or "subtext," depending on one's textual methodology. In turn, Jitsudō's oral text refers back to other unspecified texts, what might be called "tertiary," or "sub-subtexts." All of these past textual layers constitute what the French literary theorist Gérard Genette has termed a "palimpsest." The word palimpsest refers to a paper or parchment on which an original text has been partly erased to allow a new text to be written over it, leaving fragments of the original still visible. Genette uses the term as a metaphor to denote a "literature to the second degree," by which a text (the "hypertext") is constituted by the superimposition of a series of earlier texts ("hypotexts"), whose meanings survive within it.⁵ The result is a chain of texts in which the referent—in this case the "truth value" or actuality of the historical Akō event—is never directly narrated, but is denoted through the medium of other texts, which in turn refer to still other texts. By disentangling this chain of texts, one theoretically can observe how an event is slowly transfigured into its own narration, how fiction is irreparably produced by the verbal narration of a supposedly factual event, and how subsequent narrations, the "palimpsest," come to replace an event that can never be recovered for our intelligible experience.

Whatever events occurred in Edo castle on 1701.3.14, and whatever motives led forty-seven former retainers of Asano Naganori to carry out a night attack on the mansion of Kira Yoshinaka 吉良義央 on 1702.12.14–15, the "truth" underlying these events is not exactly lost, but is rather recast into a series of narrations that, passing through successive retellings in the forms of rumors, diaries,

Norinaga's manuscript is made in Maruya 1984, pp. 11–12; Kitagawa 1985, p. 27; Sekiyama 1992, p. 148; Takahashi 2002, p. 385 (note 18); and Smith 2003, pp. 24–25. *Akō gishi jiten* does not refer to it at all. The work is mentioned in passing in such works of Norinaga scholarship as Jōfuku 1980, p. 286; Iwata 1999, pp. 22–23; and Motoori Norinaga Kinenkan 2001, p. 2.

⁵ See Genette 1982.

memoirs, moral debates, historical tales, oral sermons, theatrical and pictorial representations, novels, movies, and so on, become blurred with fictional imaginaries. This is one way of explaining what Miyazawa Seiichi 宮澤誠一 has described as the “capacity” of Chūshingura, which Henry Smith has defined as “the ability of a single story to root itself into the national psyche in a way that encompasses so many issues for so many audiences in so many media.”⁶

Here we can apply the model of the palimpsest in only a preliminary and tentative fashion. Yet even a partial comparison of certain episodes of Jitsudō’s story with manuscript versions of the tale that predate it can suggest much about the evolution of the Chūshingura narrative. A full translation, by Federico Marcon, of Norinaga’s transcription follows this introductory joint analysis.

The Manuscript

Norinaga’s manuscript, a scroll measuring 15.5 x 142.5 cm (about six inches high and almost twelve feet long), was recovered from the storehouse of the Hasegawa 長谷川 family of merchants in Matsusaka in the summer of 1916 by the poet and scholar Sasaki Nobutsuna 佐佐木信綱 (1872–1963). Sasaki provisionally named it *Akō ki* 赤穂記 but did no more than announce its existence and never published it. Twelve years later, in November 1928, a descendant of Norinaga, Motoori Seizō 本居清造 (1873–1958), professor of Japanese literature at Kokugakuin 国学院 University in Tokyo and editor of the first edition of Norinaga’s collected works (destroyed, unfortunately, in the Kantō earthquake of 1923), used the blank space at the end of the scroll to append the story of how the manuscript was born, according to an anecdote handed down in the Motoori family. He wrote:

As a child, I attended the Uomachi 魚町 Elementary School in Matsusaka. From time to time the principal, Noguchi Tan 野口坦, would get the students together to tell them instructional stories. One day he told an anecdote about Norinaga, whom he described as having a remarkable memory from an early age. At around the age of twelve or thirteen, Norinaga enjoyed going to Jukyōji and listening to the sermons of the abbot, but since he always leaned against a pillar as though he were asleep, the other people listening saw this and secretly laughed at him. When he returned home, he immediately wrote down what he had heard, without omitting a single word. He also recorded every little detail of what had gone on in the course of the sermon, from the abbot taking sips of tea to the acolyte trimming the candles. When the people who had been in the audience heard about this, they were ashamed that they had laughed at him and astonished at his prodigious ability. Since this anecdote is probably not a total fabrication, I have recorded it on the remaining space of this scroll.⁷

⁶ Smith 2003, p. 1; Miyazawa 2001, p. 5.

⁷ Cited in the “Kaidai” to *Akō gishi den*, p. 39. See also Iwata 1999, pp. 22–23. It was presumably at this time in 1928 that the scroll was mounted and the work given its present title of *Akō gishi den* 赤穂義士伝. The manuscript, which has been designated a national “Important Cultural Property” (*jūyō bunkazai* 重要文化財), is preserved at the Motoori Norinaga Kinenkan 本居宣長記念館 in Matsusaka.

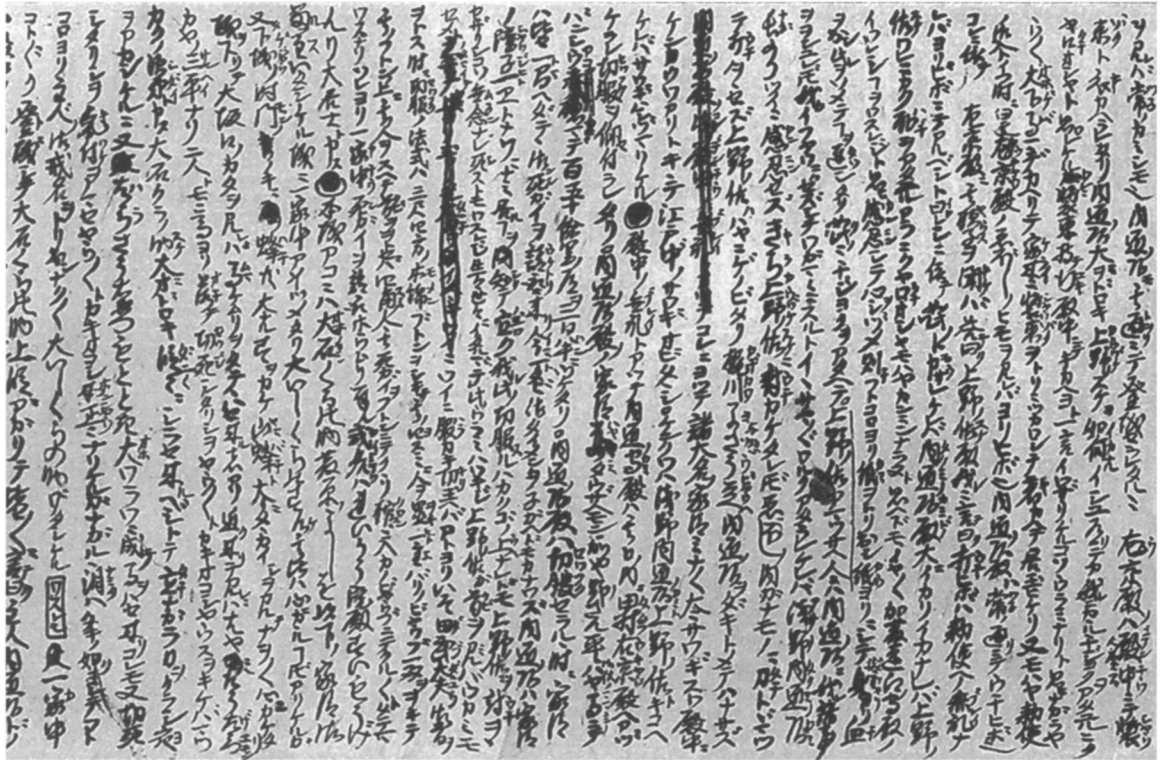


Figure 1. Opening section of Motoori Norinaga's manuscript "Akō gishi den."
 Courtesy of Motoori Norinaga Kinenkan, Matsusaka.

Whatever the truth of the anecdote, a modern reader of the text is certainly struck by the meticulous detail with which the young Yashirō recorded names, dates, and facts, albeit with frequent mistakes and misspellings. In his own prefatory comments, he himself emphasized the limitations of his effort:

Since there are things I forgot to ask, however, circumstances of the events are sometimes not clear. There are also parts that I omitted, and places where I forgot, but I went ahead and wrote it down. There are said to be some twenty different accounts that record these events. The one related [by Jitsudō] is said to be based on a book of Ōishi's letters.⁸

Indeed there are many mistakes, and Norinaga-Yashirō often interrupts the narration with the words *wasurenari* ワスレ也 ("I forgot") or *ryaku* 略 ("abbreviated"). In certain cases, Norinaga evidently made later corrections to the manuscript. At the beginning of the text proper, for example, he first wrote the "nori" in Asano Takumi no kami Naganori 浅野内匠頭長矩 in hiragana as のり, but then crossed it out and inserted a small kanji 矩 to the left, together with the furigana

⁸ *Akō gishi den*, p. 585.



ノリ in katakana (see figure 1).⁹ It is impossible at this stage to estimate when these additions might have been made. Perhaps Norinaga added corrections and insertions under the guidance of Jitsudō shortly after he heard the sermons, or perhaps he revised the manuscript later on the basis of information to be found in various of the manuscript narratives of the Akō incident that circulated at the time.

While it is not possible to ascertain the actual conditions in which the manuscript was produced, the family legend recorded by Motoori Seizō that Norinaga memorized the content (if not the precise words) of Jitsudō’s sermon seems to be supported by the heavy reliance on phonetic transcriptions of proper names. The best example is the name of the league leader Ōishi Kuranosuke 大石内蔵助, whose name is written sometimes in hiragana and other times in katakana (often with a Chinese character or two thrown in). Various small mistakes in transcribing the names of the protagonists also suggest that Norinaga was recording the bulk of the narrative from memory. Other aspects of the text indicate, however, that at some point he must have also consulted a written account of the incident. The strongest evidence of this is the list of the names of all the league

⁹ The editors of the printed version included in vol. 20 of *Motoori Norinaga zenshū* have carefully indicated the various idiosyncrasies of Yashirō’s transcription. For further details see the translation below.

members, together with their positions within the domain, stipends, and ages, that appears at the very end of the manuscript. In spite of the various errors in the names (as indicated in the notes to the translation), a list like this that provides Chinese characters for all the names without recourse to any kana transcriptions can only have been taken from another written text. In particular, the highly specific details about the stipends and the official positions of the league members would never have been provided in an oral narrative and are far too precise and detailed to have been memorized by even a prodigy like Norinaga. When did he append this information, and where did he obtain it?

One possible route of exploration is to look at Norinaga's meticulous later descriptions of the books in his own collection, for which he provided detailed lists in *Shosaichū chikushomoku* 書齋中蓄書目 (1785, recording about 150 titles kept in his study),¹⁰ *Shosekimoku* 書籍目 (date unknown, consisting of 665 titles of all the books in his personal collection),¹¹ and *Suzunoya shinsen myōmoku mokuroku* 鈴屋新撰名目目錄, a manuscript that Norinaga compiled just before his death in 1801, recording all the books and manuscripts owned by his school.¹² A check of all of these lists did not reveal any account of the Akō affair among the books that Norinaga owned. Another catalogue, *Keiseki* 経籍 (compiled between 1746 and 1757, noting all the books he knew to exist, about 3,500 titles),¹³ does include a bibliographical note on books (or more precisely, manuscripts) about the Akō incident. We shall return to this list, but suffice it to say here that it appears to have been taken almost entirely from sources listed in the preface of *Sekijō gishinden* 赤城義臣伝 of 1717, the only history of the Akō incident that existed in print in Norinaga's lifetime. This demonstrates that, at least at some point, he had access to this particular work. The list of the retainers at the end of his transcription of Jitsudō's sermon does not, however, correspond in the peculiarity of its errors to either *Sekijō gishinden* or to any known surviving manuscript account. The list alerts us to the way in which Norinaga's transcription of an oral performance resorts in its final lines to some sort of written manuscript, but it remains impossible at this point to specify what that written text was.

Nor did Norinaga ever explicitly comment, in any of his later writings, on the story of the Akō rōnin or on Jitsudō's version of the story. He had nothing to say about the nature of the loyalty of the Akō rōnin or about the appropriateness of their punishment, issues that were widely debated by Confucian scholars.¹⁴ Other than the note in the *Keiseki* catalogue, Norinaga seems to have mentioned the incident on only one occasion. On 1756.5.23, he reported in his diary of the years when he was studying medicine in Kyoto that he visited Seikanji 清閑寺

¹⁰ MNZ 20, pp. 411–17.

¹¹ MNZ 20, pp. 419–29.

¹² MNZ 20, pp. 567–80.

¹³ MNZ 20, pp. 601–34.

¹⁴ For Confucian views of these questions, see the article by James McMullen in the previous issue, "Confucian Perspectives on the Akō Revenge: Law and Moral Agency."

temple in the Higashiyama 東山 area with Hori Rantaku 堀蘭沢 (1723–1789)¹⁵ and had the opportunity to observe some paintings depicting “the forty-seven retainers of Lord Asano in armor and the forty-seven graves at Sengakuji 泉岳寺 in Edo.”¹⁶ Beyond this brief description, he said nothing.

The Sermon and Its Sources

Norinaga’s manuscript, as we have seen, claims to record a series of sermons that he heard in the ninth month of 1744 at the temple of Jukyōji. No matter how prodigious the young Yashirō’s memory may have been, it is unlikely that the account is anything close to an exact transcription of the preacher’s words. At the same time, however, Yashirō’s statement that he wrote down Jitsudō’s tale “just as my foolish ears heard it” (*waga guni ni kikishi tōri o kakishirushioku nari* 我愚耳ニきゝしとをりヲ書シルシをく也), indicates a conscious effort to record an oral rendering, and the unadorned language of the text gives it a strong flavor of oral narration. As such, this document represents one of the very rare instances in which an oral performance of the Edo period has been transmitted more or less directly in written form.¹⁷

Many questions remain, however, about the precise nature of Jitsudō’s actual performance and of the sources on which it was based. Although Jitsudō himself, as a Buddhist priest, may be presumed to have drawn from traditions of religious sermon stories (*seppō* 説法, *sekkyō* 説教, *dangi* 談義), the theme of the Akō vendetta places it more within the tradition of *kōshaku* 講釈 (later known as *kōdan* 講談, especially in the modern period), a type of storytelling in which a single reader would recite and expound upon a written text. The prototypical text was *Taiheiki* 太平記, the chronicle of the wars of the Nanbokuchō era of the fourteenth century, which from the fifteenth century came to be read aloud by priests, primarily to samurai audiences. In time, the storytellers came to incorporate commentaries on the text, emphasizing the relevance of particular features of it for the audience. Such “*Taiheiki* reading” (*Taiheiki-yomi* 太平記読み) was gradually transformed from the seventeenth into the eighteenth century into a mode of popular entertainment told by street performers. And we may assume that Buddhist preachers as well would read from and comment on the tales to entertain their listeners following a sermon, which seems to correspond to the pattern of Jitsudō’s performance.¹⁸ This is one of the lineages from which *kōshaku* emerged in the eighteenth century, broadening beyond military tales to more recent sto-

¹⁵ Hori Rantaku was the son of Hori Keizan 堀景山 (1688–1757), the head of the medical school that Norinaga attended in Kyoto.

¹⁶ *Zaikyō nikki*, p. 66.

¹⁷ Takahashi 2002, p. 370. Tanabe Kōji compares Motoori’s record to the *tentoribon* 点取本, notes taken by apprentice *kōdan* 講談 storytellers of the key points of performances by experienced seniors; Tanabe 1999 (no. 540), p. 3.

¹⁸ Sekiyama 1992, pp. 138–51.

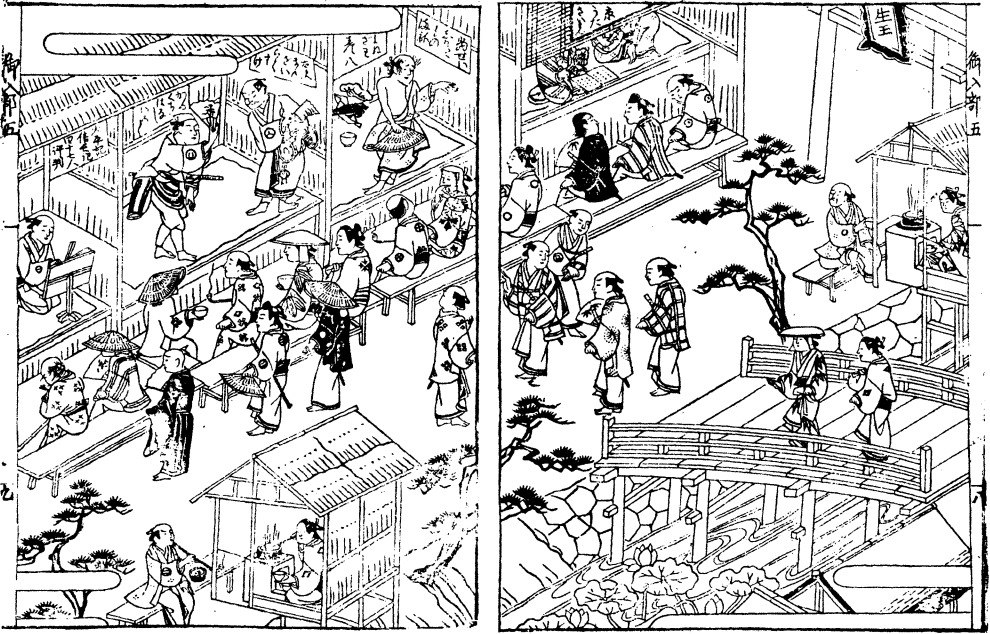


Figure 2. *Taiheiki-yomi* storyteller (far left) in front of Ikutama shrine, Osaka, with a placard advertising tales of *Taiheiki*, *Nobunaga ki*, and the Forty-Seven Rōnin. From Yuzuke Gansui 湯漬翫水, *Gonyūbu kyara onna* 御入部伽羅女 (1710), kan 5. Courtesy of Ōsaka Furitsu Nakanoshima Toshokan 大阪府立中之島図書館.

ries of daimyo succession disputes (*oie sōdō* お家騒動) and vendettas like that of the Akō rōnin.¹⁹

Manuscript accounts of the Akō vendetta began to circulate in the years immediately following the execution of the forty-six rōnin in 1703, and it seems likely that a wide variety of storytellers likewise quickly began to tell the tale of the “Righteous Samurai” (Gishi 義士) of Akō. Evidence merely of the fact of such oral performances is extremely rare, however, let alone of the content of the stories told. One tantalizing fragment of visual evidence may be found in an illustration from a novel of 1710 entitled *Gonyūbu kyara onna* 御入部伽羅女 (figure 2), which depicts a variety of popular performers at the entrance to Ikutama shrine 生玉神社 in Osaka. Among these, to the far left, in a stall next to a pair of *manzai* 万才 performers, is a *kōshakushi*, with his familiar lectern and fan, reading to a diverse group of spectators, some seated on a bench, some standing. A placard above proclaims his themes as *Taiheiki*, “The Chronicle of Nobunaga”

¹⁹ For useful brief accounts of *Taiheiki-yomi*, see Nakamura 1975 and Nobuhiro 1987. For more detailed recent studies of *Taiheiki-yomi* in the Tokugawa period, see Hyōdō 1995 and Wakao 1999. For connections with the Akō vendetta, see Hyōdō 1995, pp. 139–43; and Wakao 1999, pp. 111–16.

(*Nobunaga ki* 信長記), and “The Forty-Seven Men” (*Shijūshichi-nin* 四十七人).²⁰ It is particularly revealing that the saga of the Akō rōnin is being narrated, just ten years after their death, in the company of great military epics of the past. During the lifetime of the shogun Tokugawa Tsunayoshi 徳川綱吉 (r. 1680–1709), narration of the story of the Akō incident was limited largely to private manuscripts and to novels published in the Kamigata (Kyoto-Osaka) region in which the names were disguised and the setting transposed to the era of *Taiheiki*. Following Tsunayoshi’s death in early 1709, however, and the subsequent pardon of Asano Daigaku 浅野大学 (the younger brother of Asano Naganori and heir to his line), there appeared in late 1710 in Kyoto and Osaka a series of kabuki and jōruri as well as *kanazōshi* 仮名草子 novels that took off on the Akō incident, albeit always disguising the protagonists’ names and the era.²¹ The storyteller at Ikutama shrine in Osaka was undoubtedly taking advantage of the current interest in the Akō vendetta.

The priest Jitsudō who visited Matsusaka in 1744, however, was not a street entertainer but a proper Buddhist preacher. A more appropriate visual image for his performance is perhaps to be found in *Imayō heta dangi* 当世下手談義, by Jōkanbō Kōa 静観坊好阿, an assortment of “sermonizing” sketches of contemporary Edo customs that was published in 1752, as the first of a new genre of popular literature that came to be known as *dangibon* 談義本.²² One of the sketches involves a storyteller who lectures on *Tsurezuregusa* 徒然草, with an illustration showing the bespectacled speaker with his fan and lectern (*shakudai* 釈台), facing an audience of men who seem mostly preoccupied with other things (figure 3). We can imagine that the scene inside Jukyōji temple was similar to this.

But what were the sources for Jitsudō’s long and involved narration? The various *kanazōshi* novels and theatrical performances—both kabuki and jōruri—that had appeared in the decades since 1710 had only the most tenuous connection with the actual historical events of 1701–1703. Jitsudō, by contrast, told a story that in much of its particular detail is historically accurate, carefully using the real names of the protagonists and conveying in general a strong consciousness of authentic historicity. We may thus presume that he drew from a narrative tradition distinct from that being elaborated in *kanazōshi* and the theater, a tradition that was more concerned with preserving at least an appearance of historical veracity. At the same time, however, many of the most interesting passages in the narrative reflect either popular legend or self-conscious improvisation by storytellers. In this regard it resembles the manuscript historical novels

²⁰ Reproduced and discussed in Hida 1986, pp. 168–69. The placard includes the word *hyōban* 評判 (“critical commentary”) at the end, but it is unclear whether this refers specifically to the “Forty-Seven Men” or to all three topics. In the *Taiheiki-yomi* tradition, the word *hyōban* was frequently used to refer to commentaries on *Taiheiki*, as opposed to the text itself. See Nakamura 1975.

²¹ See Smith 2003, p. 20.

²² *Imayō heta dangi*.

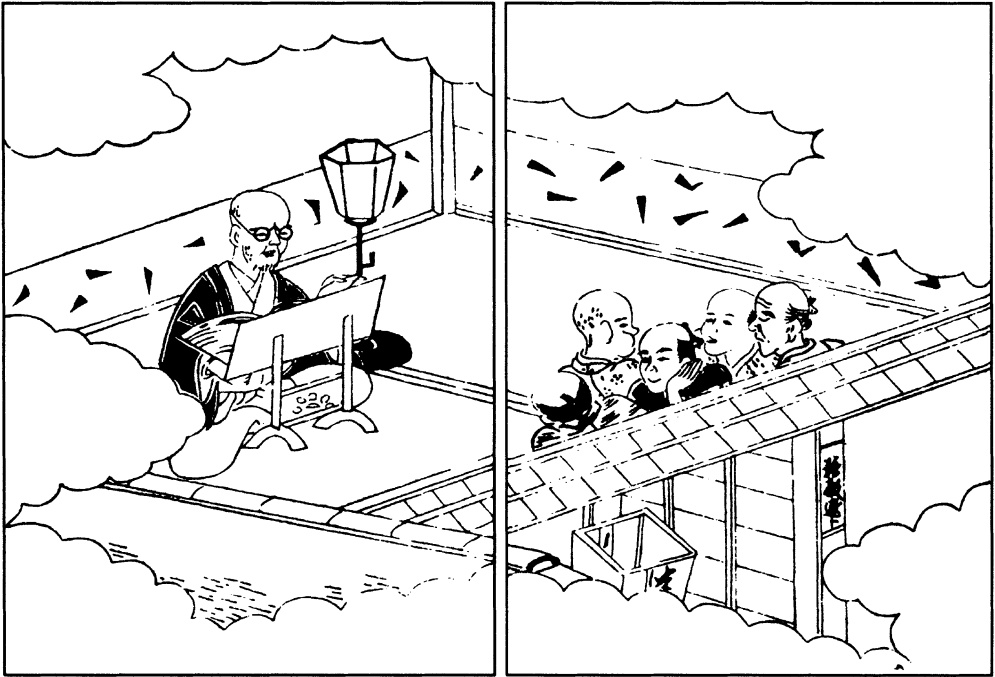


Figure 3. *Kōshaku* lecture by Udono Taiboku 鵜殿退卜 on *Tsurezuregusa*, from *Jōkanbō Kōa*, *Imayō heta dangi* (Edo, 1752), kan 4. Courtesy of Iwanami Shoten.

now known generically as *jitsuroku*, or “true records,” which from the late eighteenth century seem to have developed in tandem with *kōshaku* tales.²³

The tradition of *Taiheiki*-reading as it had evolved into *kōshaku* in the mid-Edo period was in its origins text-based, although it is clear that the storytellers often departed from their written texts to offer comments, elaborations, and further improvisations. As in the illustrations in both figures 2 and 3, the prototypical *kōshakushi* sat with a lectern in front of him on which the text was placed and used a fan to punctuate his reading. But while in the case of *Taiheiki*, the text in question had long been established, no such fixed written records existed for the newer tales of vendettas and daimyo succession disputes that had occurred

²³ The term *jitsuroku* is the source of some confusion when speaking of accounts of the Akō vendetta. Used in its broadest and most literal sense of a “true account,” the word refers to any chronicle that claims to tell of historical events in a direct and truthful manner. In this sense, all of the historical chronicles of the Akō vendetta that appeared in the early years after the incident are *jitsuroku*, although they differ widely in style and reliability. Among historians of Japanese literature, however, *jitsuroku* has come to mean a particular genre of long historical novel that circulated in manuscript in the later Edo period. Its usage in this sense has been explained as an abbreviation of the term “*jitsuroku*-style novel” (*jitsurokutai shōsetsu* 実録体小説); see Takahashi 2002, pp. 2–8 (especially note 2). As Nakamura 1984 stresses, the line between the early chronicles and the later *jitsuroku*-style novels is not a sharp one, since the former evolved over time into the latter. Nevertheless, we here avoid calling the early chronicles *jitsuroku* and reserve the term for the later novelistic manuscript accounts; for this approach, see also Smith forthcoming.

in the recent Tokugawa past. Because of the continuing prohibition of any printed works dealing with political events of the Tokugawa period, treatment of such matters was confined to manuscripts—typically circulated by the book-lenders known as *kashihon'ya* 貸本屋—and oral performances. This was the environment out of which emerged the *jitsuroku* historical novels of the eighteenth century. The highly episodic structure of many of these *jitsuroku* suggests their links with oral narration, and it appears that *kōshaku* storytellers would use *jitsuroku* manuscripts as sources for their tales, and perhaps also for direct reading.

At the time that Jitsudō told the tale that Norinaga recorded in 1744, however, *jitsuroku*-style narratives seem to have been in their infancy so it is highly unlikely that such manuscript texts were among his sources. On the contrary, it was precisely individualized oral performances like that of Jitsudō, as told both by secular and religious storytellers, that surely provided a major repository for the subsequent authors of *jitsuroku*-style manuscript novels. This does not mean, of course, that Jitsudō did not work from some sort of text as he performed. It is unlikely, however, that this would have been a full written text to be read line by line. More likely it was a series of notes, what later *kōshaku* performers would call a “sourcebook” (*tanehon* 種本), that provided summaries of the key facts and chief episodes—what is called in Italian a *canovaccio*, or plot summary. We may speculate that Jitsudō’s narration thus lay in a gray zone between “oral” literature (told wholly from memory) and “aural” literature (read aloud from a written text).²⁴

This is by no means to say that Jitsudō was faced with a dearth of documentary evidence about the Akō incident. On the contrary, he conceivably had a rich array of material available, as Norinaga himself intimates in the opening remarks to his transcription, in which he observes that, “There are said to be some twenty different accounts that record these events. The one related [by Jitsudō] is said to be based on a book of Ōishi’s letters.” The latter observation, about a book of Ōishi’s letters providing a foundation for Jitsudō’s account of the incident, does not really make sense. Today, forty-odd authentic letters of Ōishi Kuranosuke survive, but most of these would not have been available to any one person in the mid-eighteenth century, and even if they had, they would have left many gaps in the narrative.²⁵ It seems more likely that “Ōishi’s letters” served rather

²⁴ For a consideration of the concept of “aurality” (defined as “the reading of books aloud to one or more people”) both theoretically and historically (for late medieval England and France), see Coleman 1996.

²⁵ For a generally reliable chronology of the surviving letters of the Akō rōnin, see Akō-shi 1987, vol. 3, pp. 733–45. Of forty-three letters of Ōishi listed there, ten were transmitted in *Horibe Taketsune hikki* 堀部武庸筆記, the chronicle of the incident until mid-1702 left by Horibe Yasubei 堀部安兵衛. It is possible that Norinaga’s reference is to one particular letter that circulated widely; it was dated 1702.12.24, addressed to Terai Genkei 寺井玄溪, and signed by Ōishi, Hara Sōemon 原惣右衛門, and Onodera Jūnai 小野寺十内; to it was appended a general overview of the attack on Kira known as “Uchiiri jikkyō oboegaki” 討入実況覚書. For a source contemporary to the Akō incident that includes this letter, see *Kōseki kenmonki* 江赤見聞記, vol. 5, in Nabeta 1910–1911, vol. 3, pp. 305–306.

as a rhetorical guarantee that the account was based on the direct testimony of the participants, revealing again the commitment to historicity that was implicit in this particular narrative form, always assuming that the events described had actually happened and using the real names of all involved.

We can probably take more literally Norinaga's reference to "some twenty" (*nijū amari* 廿余) written accounts of the Akō incident. This happens to conform nicely with the number of titles—twenty-four—listed in the bibliographic note about records of the incident that Norinaga provided in *Keiseki*, the catalogue of books that he compiled between 1746 and 1757, not long after recording Jitsudō's account in 1744. A close look at the titles listed in *Keiseki*, however, makes it immediately clear that he simply copied all of them from the list of works appearing in *Sekijō gishinden* (which was itself the last of Norinaga's twenty-four titles).²⁶ This early-eighteenth-century account of the Akō incident had been composed by Katashima Shin'en 片島深淵 (dates unknown), a retired samurai living in Osaka. The author of several books on gunnery and military matters, Katashima had a special reverence for the Akō avengers. He assiduously traveled about the country gathering materials and talking to people who had known the rōnin, producing the longest and most detailed account of the incident until that time. The real significance of the work, however, is that it was published in Osaka as a printed book, on the seventeenth memorial of the death of the Akō rōnin in 1719, in open defiance of official prohibitions. Although banned the following year, it circulated widely, contributing greatly to spreading the fame of the Akō Gishi.²⁷

In the preface to his book Katashima explained that he relied primarily on *Tsūzoku engi sekijō meiden* 通俗演義赤城盟伝, which he describes as the work of one Nomura (Nomura Itsumin 野村逸民, dates unknown), who in turn had taken as the basis of his own account a text entitled *Sekijō meiden* 赤城盟伝.²⁸ This latter was a history of the league written in kanbun by one of the Edo-based league members, Kanzaki Yogorō 神崎与五郎, with revisions and comments added by Maebara Isuke 前原伊助 and Kimura Okaemon 木村岡右衛門; it had been completed the month before the night attack.²⁹ Nomura rendered this account into Japanese, and added various letters by league members to create what the title refers to as a *tsūzoku engi*, a "popular chronicle" for general consumption; the term also suggests possible use for *kōshaku* performance.³⁰ In a list of "works cited" (*insho mokuroku* 引書目録), Katashima first noted Nomura's book, fol-

²⁶ Norinaga listed this work as *Taihei gishinden* 太平義臣伝, the title under which it was widely circulated to avoid the censors, and a revealing link of its ties to the *Taiheiki* tradition.

²⁷ *Akō gishi jiten*, p. 479; and Smith 2002, p. 23. Fukumoto 1914, p. 912, relates that the group of publishers who printed the book anticipated the official response and sold it quickly in several large lots before a ban could be issued.

²⁸ *Sekijō gishinden*, pp. 7–9. Nomura's name "Itsumin" is from *Kokusho sōmokuoku*.

²⁹ For the text of *Sekijō meiden*, see Nabeta 1910–1911, vol. 1, pp. 132–41 (followed on pp. 142–55 by a rendering in Japanese); and Akō-shi 1987, vol. 3, pp. 260–66.

³⁰ *Kokusho sōmokuoku* gives a date of 1707 for *Tsūzoku engi Sekijō meiden*.

lowed by almost the same term (*in'yō no sho* 引用の書), clearly suggesting that the subsequent twenty-two indented titles were works consulted by Nomura, and not by Katashima himself.³¹

Of the twenty-two titles listed by Nomura, fully fourteen (60 percent) do not appear to survive today, and indeed are not even mentioned in any other surviving work—a remarkable indication of how much of the early written record of the Akō incident has been lost.³² Conversely, the Nomura list does not include roughly half of the most important early chronicles that do survive to the present—an equally revealing indication of the limitations on access to information in a situation where one could write about sensitive political incidents only in privately circulated manuscripts.³³ In other words, the records about the Akō incident that circulated in the years 1703–1710 were both far more numerous but at the same time far more restricted in the number of people who had access to any given document than is often imagined.

To return to Jitsudō's sermon and Norinaga's comments, the obvious question is, did either Jitsudō or Norinaga know about *Sekijō gishinden* and its listed sources at the time? Norinaga's mention of "some twenty" chronicles seems suspiciously close to the number of works listed by Katashima, and we know for sure that he later used that list almost verbatim in his bibliographical note in *Keiseki*. We also know that he must have used some sort of written document to provide the information on the list of the rōnin at the very end of his manuscript. Yet, as noted above, the peculiarities of that list do not correspond to any known surviving text, including *Sekijō gishinden*. We must conclude that the detailed data in the list of league members came from some other, yet unidentified work and that he discovered *Sekijō gishinden* only after transcribing Jitsudō's talk.

But what of Jitsudō himself? Here the situation is more complicated, and reveals the true complexity of the Chūshingura palimpsest. Jitsudō may have derived some of his account, directly or indirectly, from *Sekijō gishinden*, yet that work cannot have been the sole source for his tale or even the basis for much of its detail. To excavate Jitsudō's possible sources, we must dig more deeply.

³¹ *Sekijō gishinden*, p. 10.

³² The fourteen titles are as follows (in the order listed in *Sekijō gishinden*). It is possible that some may be alternative titles for works that do in fact survive or for shorter documents that survive within the longer chronicles: *Sekijō kidan* 赤城紀談, *Nishiyama kibun* 西山紀聞, *Gishi buntsū* 義士文通, *Tsuika Kaisekiki* 追加介石記, *Shinsen Ōishi ki* 新撰大石記, *Kinkashū* 槿花集, *Akō chūshin ki* 赤穂忠臣記, *Kaisenki* 介淺記, *Buke meikyōki* 武家明鏡記, *Hōsō kidan* 蓬窓紀談, *Zuikōin ki* 瑞光院記, *Yamashina no kikigaki* 山科の聞書, *Gishi kō* 義士考, and *Gishi zetsuei* 義士絶縷.

³³ Six early Akō chronicles that do not appear on the list in *Sekijō gishinden* are as follows (all were included in Nabeta 1910–1911, for which the volume numbers and pagination are provided here): *Asakichi ichiranki* 浅吉一覽記 (n.d.), vol. 1, pp. 370–406; *Asano adauchi ki* 浅野仇討記 (n.d.), vol. 2, pp. 118–59; Ogawa Tsunemitsu 小川恒充, *Chūsei gokanroku* 忠誠後鑑録 (1708), vol. 3, pp. 410–553; Ochiai Yozaemon 落合与左衛門 (attrib.), *Kōseki kenmonki* (n.d.), vol. 3, pp. 272–362; Miyake Kanran 三宅観瀾, *Resshi hōshūroku* 烈士報讐録 (n.d.), vol. 1, pp. 513–24; and *Sekijō shiwa* 赤城土話 (n.d.), vol. 1, pp. 196–258.

Excavating the Palimpsest

We may surmise from the evidence that Jitsudō surely knew of records of the Akō incident that no longer survive, but also that he probably had no knowledge of many other records that existed at the time, some of which have survived to this day. Given these disparities, there is no way that we can ever know for sure what preexisting texts he used to construct his narrative, or—equally important—how much he may have provided from his own imagination. Digging, like any archaeologist, where we are permitted, we can only try to start putting together some of the fragments of the palimpsest, most of which has been erased beyond all possible recognition. The method here will be quite straightforward. We first singled out nineteen episodes that had no plausible basis in reliable primary documents, and that seemed of their nature to be the likely products of unsubstantiated rumor or conscious literary imagination. To see which can be identified as having antecedents, we have checked the major surviving manuscript chronicles of the Akō incident,³⁴ as well as *Sekijō gishinden*, as the work that was doubtless the most widely circulated because of the multiple copies made available in print.

In addition, to estimate the relationship of these episodes to the subsequent *jitsuroku* tradition we examined a readily available version of a major *jitsuroku* lineage about the Akō incident, *Akō seigi naishidokoro* 赤穂正義内侍所. According to Hasegawa Tsuyoshi 長谷川強, a leading scholar of *ukiyo-zōshi*, the lineage derived from what was apparently an early manuscript work titled *Naishidokoro* 内侍所 by Miyako no Nishiki 都の錦, a writer of *ukiyo-zōshi* who emerged in Osaka in 1702, briefly disappeared, and then resurfaced in Edo just after the night attack of the Akō rōnin. We have been unable to locate any extant version of this specific work, but according to Hasegawa, it is a fairly faithful chronicle of the Akō incident of a modest five-kan length. Although it bears a preface date of the middle of the first month of 1703, Hasegawa believes this date to be a fabrication to enhance the sense of historicity, and that it was really written in early Shōtoku 正徳 (after 1711).³⁵ It was only several decades later, however, that it seems to have been expanded it into a true *jitsuroku*-style novel running to dozens of kan—of which the forty-kan version dated 1770 is the earliest known example.³⁶ This means that although the original kernel of the work predated Jitsudō's account by well over three decades, it probably took shape in fully developed form only

³⁴ The titles surveyed include the six titles mentioned in the preceding note as not listed in *Sekijō gishinden* but available in printed form in Nabeta 1910–1911. We have also checked four surviving titles listed in *Sekijō gishinden* that all had considerable later influence: Muro Kyūsō 室鳩巢, *Akō gijin roku* 赤穂義人録 (1703); Sugimoto Yoshichika 杉本義鄰, *Akō shōshūki* 赤穂鍾秀記 (1703); *Ekisui renbeiroku* 易水連袂録 (1703); and *Kaisekiki* 介石記 (n.d.).

³⁵ Hasegawa 1994a, p. 61. Miyako no Nishiki's *Naishidokoro* does not appear in *Kokusho sōmoku-roku*, and Hasegawa gives no indication of where he has seen a surviving copy, so we must rely on his brief description of the work.

³⁶ Nakamura 1984, while observing the difficulty of distinguishing a true “*jitsuroku*-style novel” from earlier chronicles without novelistic pretensions, identifies the forty-kan version of *Akō seigi naishidokoro* with a preface date of 1770 as an “early” example.

later, most likely in the 1760s. The version we have used, edited by Misumi Kan 三角寛 under the title of *Akō seigi* 赤穂精義, is undated and could conceivably be as late as the mid-nineteenth century; there is simply no way of knowing for sure given the absence of any systematic study of surviving *jitsuroku* manuscripts. For our purposes here, however, it seems acceptable to take the Misumi version as an example of the richly elaborated *jitsuroku* of the Akō incident that were to evolve in the second half of the eighteenth century.

Collation among these works of the elements in Jitsudō's account that seem most likely to be the product of rumor and imagination indicates that such episodes can be classified in three different groups, and that these reveal something of the ways in which the Akō legends evolved historically. First are those stories that emerged in the immediate aftermath of the Akō incident and may be found in the early chronicles leading up to *Sekijō gishinden* of 1719; even though such episodes are not corroborated by surviving primary documents, in retelling them, Jitsudō was simply following what had become the mainstream of the historical tradition. Second are episodes that cannot be found in any of the surviving manuscript records, including *Sekijō gishinden*, but which appear in *Akō seigi* and are known to have been widespread in similar later *jitsuroku* accounts. These presumably are elements common to the oral tradition that would presently appear in the *jitsuroku* novel genre. Finally come those stories that are to be found only in Jitsudō's account, and which might even have been the product of his own imagination. Below we will briefly consider several examples from each of these three categories, accounting for ten of the nineteen "fictional" episodes we have identified.³⁷

The most straightforward instances of legends that were already widespread and that Jitsudō merely perpetuated include some of those about the circumstances of Asano's initial attack on Kira in Edo castle. Jitsudō relates that the trouble began when Asano failed to bribe the greedy Kira. Over the centuries, this explanation has become so deeply entrenched that it is widely accepted as historical fact, although no primary evidence has ever been found to support the story. It is certainly a plausible explanation of Asano's grudge against Kira, however, and it appears from an early point in both *Akō shōshūki* 赤穂鍾秀記 and *Akō gijin roku* 赤穂義人録, the two seminal (and closely related) chronicles appearing within a year after the incident.³⁸ As Bitō Masahide 尾藤正英 has pointed out, it

³⁷ The other nine episodes are identified in the notes to the translation as follows: the visit of the retainers to the Tamura 田村 mansion on the occasion of Asano's seppuku (note 16), Kuranosuke's burning of his vow of revenge in front of his son (note 37), the allegation that Ōishi Chikara 大石主税 was Kuranosuke's son by a concubine (note 40), the story of a fight between Kuranosuke and Horibe Yasubei (note 46), the story of Chōzō 長藏 the Ox (note 53), the suicide of Takebayashi Tadashichi's 武林唯七 parents (note 57), the assignment of the kana syllabary to the rōnin in groups of three (note 62), the visit of the rōnin to Sengakuji the morning before the attack on Kira (note 70), and Yokogawa Kanpei's 横川勘平 interception of a letter from Kira that same morning (note 71).

³⁸ Muro Kyūsō's *Akō gijin roku*, which was dated 1703.11 (but later revised in about 1709), is known to have been based in considerable part on information supplied by Sugimoto Yoshichika,

was probably based not on the imagination of the chroniclers, but rather reflected rumors that were widespread in Edo at the time.³⁹ Rather more suspicious is the further elaboration of the story in the form of a warning from Katō Yasuzane 加藤泰実, the daimyo of Ōzu 大洲, that he also had been tormented by Kira in the past. Even more certainly apocryphal is the tale that Kira forced Asano to change the tatami in the reception room for the imperial envoys. Both anecdotes appear, however, in *Akō shōshūki* (and the former in *Akō gijin roku* as well), and they were continued, with additional details, in *Akō seigi* and other *jitsuroku* and *kōdan* versions, becoming familiar staples.⁴⁰ The story of changing the tatami, in particular, became a standard feature of modern Chūshingura films. (The further detail found in Norinaga's account of Asano replastering the walls, however, is not found elsewhere and may have been improvised by Jitsudō.)

A different pattern may be detected in the story of the battle between the wasps and the hornets. In Jitsudō's telling, it is a brief episode that highlights Kuranosuke's psychological state of apprehension in Akō even before the arrival of the first messengers brought news of the disaster in Edo. Searching for precedents, we could find this tale only in Katashima's *Sekijō gishinden*, where it constitutes a sustained dramatic account with a moral lesson and is clearly the result of a literary imagination. Suddenly and mysteriously, an immense nest of wasps (*kobachi* 小蜂)—some three feet in diameter—appeared beneath the eaves of the east gate of Akō castle just about the time of the incident in Edo. As passersby watched in wonder, a large hornet (*yamabachi* 山蜂) flew into in the vicinity of the nest, only to be taunted and teased by the wasps. Enraged, the hornet tried to strike at the wasps, but proved no match for their numbers and eventually fell dead to the ground. A short time later, a huge cloud formed in the sky, and an entire swarm of hornets surrounded the wasps' nest. After a fierce battle, the hornets succeeded in destroying the wasps with minimal losses of their own. The narrator declares this to have been an omen: insects of the bee family will die if their king (not “queen,” as in English) dies, but if the king is killed, they will seek revenge. The message is clear: like the hornets, the Akō retainers are destined to take revenge for their doomed “king.”⁴¹

The battle of the wasps and hornets is also found in *Akō seigi*. The account there follows the version of *Sekijō gishinden* closely, often using identical language, but introducing two revealing differences: the episode is prefaced by a description of Kuranosuke's uneasy state of mind as he waits word that the reception of the imperial envoys has been safely completed, and it is Kuranosuke himself, not the narrator, who provides the interpretation of the omen.⁴² Jitsudō's account likewise would appear to take off from *Sekijō gishinden*, but with a

author of *Akō shōshūki*, although the two accounts differ in many details. For this element, see *Akō shōshūki*, p. 417; and *Akō gijin roku*, p. 274.

³⁹ Bitō 2003, p. 152.

⁴⁰ See *Akō shōshūki*, p. 419; *Akō gijin roku*, p. 276; *Akō seigi*, pp. 61–64.

⁴¹ *Sekijō gishinden*, pp. 27–29.

⁴² *Akō seigi*, pp. 110–11.

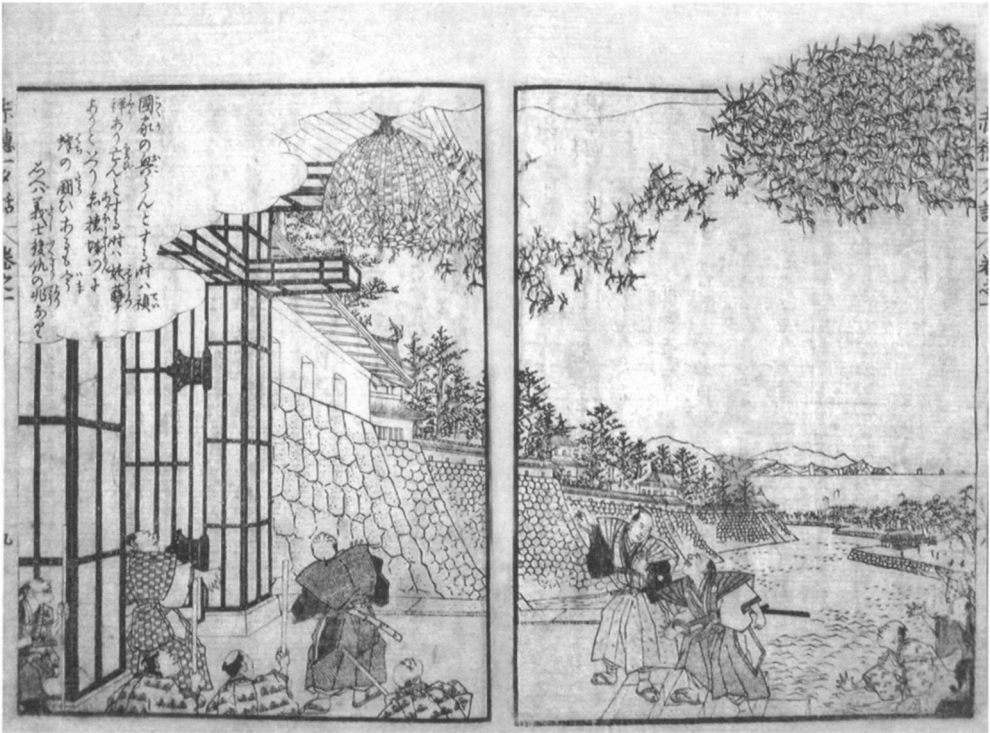


Figure 4. The battle of the wasps and the hornets, from Yamazaki Yoshishige, *Akō gishiden issekiwa*, kan 1 (1854). Illustration by Hashimoto Gyokuran. Courtesy of C. V. Starr East Asian Library, Columbia University.

somewhat different twist. While Norinaga likely omitted various details, the emphasis in his version is on Kuranosuke's anxiety, rather than the parable of revenge as embodied in the symbolism of the wasps and the hornets. This suggests that in evolutionary terms *Jitsudō*'s tale lies between *Sekijō gishinden* and the later *jitsuroku*, but also that it bears its own distinctive approach to the story. The story of the wasps and the hornets would continue to figure in subsequent works deriving from the *jitsuroku* tradition, such as Yamazaki Yoshishige's 山崎美成 *Akō gishiden issekiwa* 赤穂義士伝一夕話. Published in 1854, this printed account followed closely *Sekijō gishinden* and *Akō seigi* and included a vivid illustration of the battle by Hashimoto Gyokuran 橋本玉蘭 (Utagawa Sadahide 歌川貞秀; see figure 4).

Another legend that was already established in earlier chronicles is that of the Osaka merchant Amanoya Rihei 天野屋利兵衛, who is described in both *Akō shōshūki* and *Chūsei gokanroku* 忠誠後鑑録 (an early chronicle not listed in *Sekijō gishinden*) as having filled a secret order from Kuranosuke to supply spears for the league. According to these accounts, Amanoya was later arrested and tortured by Osaka police officials but refused to reveal the plot of revenge. After the incident, he is said to have been released from prison with a light sentence

of banishment, and to have taken the tonsure and retired to Kyoto under a new name.⁴³ According to Hasegawa Tsuyoshi, clear historical evidence proves that Amanoya Rihei existed and that he served as a *chōnin* city official (*sōdoshiyori* 惣年寄) in Osaka, although he may have retired before the incident (or possibly afterwards, Hasegawa suggests, because rumor linked him to it).⁴⁴ No primary evidence survives, however, about any real ties with the Akō rōnin or about his imprisonment, and Hasegawa speculates that the story was devised in the networks of rumor to come up with details on the ways in which the rōnin spent their long months of plotting. Jitsudō's account follows closely on the earlier versions. Such later *jitsuroku* as *Akō seigi* went on to develop the story in much greater detail.⁴⁵ Rihei was also, of course, the model for the loyal merchant Amakawaya Gihei 天河屋義平 in act 10 of *Kanadehon chūshingura* 仮名手本忠臣蔵 of 1748, which was to spin out a far more fanciful tale.

As a final example of the way in which Jitsudō worked to carry on earlier legends, we may turn to the brief but fascinating mention of the fate of Kira's head. This is one of the few of the many story-lines of the Chūshingura legend that have been examined in close detail. Imao Tetsuya 今尾哲也, a scholar of early modern theater and literature, has documented how, in the few days following the attack on Kira, a richly conflicting variety of rumors emerged about the fate of his head. These rumors then made their way into almost all of the early chronicles.⁴⁶ The two major variables were the number of heads and the routes that they took to Sengakuji, the temple where Asano was buried. One set of documents compiled within four days of the attack reported three cases of rumors that had three separate heads being carried away from the Kira mansion and one case that had two.⁴⁷ Combining these reports with the rumors documented in early manuscript chronicles, we find that the real head of Kira was typically said to have been taken to Sengakuji in advance by a specially appointed team of rōnin, ranging in number from two to six, sometimes by land but as often by boat. Meanwhile, the head carried with the main force by land was either a dummy head or the head of someone else (variously Kira's son Sahyōe 左兵衛, his guard Kobayashi Heihachirō 小林平八郎, a young lover of Kira, or a lowly servant). The

⁴³ The two accounts are roughly similar in overall terms, but differ in some particular details. In *Akō shōshūki*, Amanoya's name is given not as Rihei but rather Jirōemon 次郎右衛門, and he is described as a *machi nanushi* 町名主 rather than *sōdoshiyori* 惣年寄. In addition, his new name after release from prison is given as Sōgo 宗悟 in *Akō shōshūki* and as Matsunaga Dosai 松永土齋 in *Chūsei gokanroku*. See *Akō shōshūki*, pp. 477–78; *Chūsei gokanroku*, pp. 547–48.

⁴⁴ Hasegawa 1994b, pp. 10–12, citing *Osaka-shi shi* 大阪市史, vol. 1, for the historical Rihei. Hasegawa also notes the appearance of Rihei in various *kanazōshi* novels as well as in Miyako no Nishiki's *Naishidokoro* chronicle, and speculates on the connections among the various types of accounts. He makes no mention of Jitsudō's account. It is also worth noting that the story of Amanoya Rihei does not appear in *Sekijō gishinden*, suggesting that Katashima found it either unpersuasive or uninteresting.

⁴⁵ See *Akō seigi*, pp. 318–24, 521–22.

⁴⁶ Imao 1987, pp. 7–94.

⁴⁷ Imao 1987, pp. 29–30, citing “Kuwana-han shoden oboegaki 桑名藩所伝覚書,” in Nabeta 1910–1911, vol. 2, pp. 352–61.

point of the deception was to ensure that pursuers would not recapture Kira's head and deter the rōnin from their primary goal of offering it at the grave of their master at Sengakuji.

In this particular case, Jitsudō's account, at least as it was reported by Norinaga, offers what was probably the most compact and dynamic variant for a storyteller, namely that the real head was transported by boat and the head taken by land was a decoy. Jitsudō's version, however, also reveals a basic confusion on his (or Norinaga's) part, since he lists the carriers by boat as Yoshida Chūzaemon 吉田忠左衛門 and Tomimori Sukeemon 富森助右衛門. Of the various accounts mentioned by Imao that have the head transported by boat, none give these two names. Rather, virtually all other historical and semihistorical accounts report (as Jitsudō himself has it a few lines later) that Ōishi dispatched these two retainers en route to Sengakuji to carry official notice of the completed revenge to the bakufu chief inspector Sengoku Hisanao 仙石久尚. In the end, Imao argues, the most important lesson of the complex history of Kira's heads is that the earliest imagination at work in building legends of the Akō incident was not that of self-conscious writers or storytellers, but rumors of the streets, as variant stories sped through the city of Edo like wildfire in the hours and days immediately following the night attack. Imao has no single explanation for how and where the rumors began, but he does offer some speculations.⁴⁸

The second class of anecdotes told by Jitsudō, of which we provide two examples, includes those that appear in *Akō seigi* and other later *jitsuroku* novels, but have yet to be confirmed in earlier chronicles or literary works. Jitsudō's versions may thus constitute the earliest surviving datable appearances. This does not mean, of course, that Jitsudō himself invented the stories. Still, while not forgetting that all "origins" emerge out of existing context, we should remind ourselves that at least some of the episodes within the huge complex of stories about the Akō incident may have had a historical "origin," as the invention of a single storyteller at one point in time.

The first story is actually a sequence of episodes relating how Kira repeatedly harassed Asano by giving him inappropriate guidance about what he should wear to the ceremonies for the imperial envoys. The sequence constitutes a fairly long and detailed passage in Norinaga's record of Jitsudō's narrative, but we have not yet been able to find any of its elements in earlier accounts, although they would become quite familiar in later *jitsuroku* versions and would continue on into novels and films in the modern period. Since proper dress was so basic to a world as obsessed with status and ritual as the bakufu court under Tsunayoshi, it is surprising, in a way, that Jitsudō's account may be one of the earliest to allege the matter of costume as a cause of Asano's anxiety and consequent anger towards Kira. Jitsudō's version incorporates two related incidents. In the initial incident Kira fails to inform Asano that he will need two completely different formal costumes in the same day and hence should bring a change of clothes with him to

⁴⁸ Imao 1987, p. 49.

Edo castle. Precisely the same type of story is told in *Akō seigi*, where Asano is forced to rush back to his mansion to get the second costume.⁴⁹ The other incident turns on a much finer detail of dress, one that we have not found even in subsequent accounts, namely the esoteric distinction between two different forms of cord used to secure the pointed court cap known as an *eboshi* 烏帽子.

The second example for which we could find no precedent receives only brief mention, to be sure, but it would later become a prominent theme in legends about Ōishi Kuranosuke: his dissipation in the pleasure quarters of Fushimi 伏見, south of Kyoto, in the district known as Shumoku-machi 撞木町. Miyazawa Seiichi has written recently about the early evolution of the general theme of Ōishi indulging in dissipation as a way to mislead his enemies, but does not take up the specific details of Ōishi's pleasure-seeking in Fushimi.⁵⁰ As analyzed in detail by the literary historian Yamamoto Takashi 山本卓, however, the stories of Ōishi's adventures in Fushimi form an important constellation in later *jitsuroku*.⁵¹ Here it will suffice to observe that the courtesan whom Kuranosuke is said to have favored in Shumoku-machi was named Ukihashi 浮橋 in almost all later such accounts.⁵² Jitsudō, however, refers to her as Ukifune うき船, a usage of which we have been able to find no other example. It should be noted that "Ukifune," as the name of a well-known character from *Genji monogatari* 源氏物語, is quite a bit more plausible as the name of a courtesan than "Ukihashi." Is it possible that Jitsudō's tale represents the only known surviving evidence of the earliest form of the name of Kuranosuke's Fushimi favorite, which was later corrupted to "Ukihashi"? We cannot, of course, be sure, but such a possibility reveals the degree to which the Jitsudō account helps to fill in details in a chronology that remains under construction.

The final type of imaginative episode in Jitsudō's account to be considered here is that for which there is no known precedent and no known subsequent version. Here again, this means neither that Jitsudō himself invented the stories, nor that they did not later diffuse more widely. But at the same time, we must allow for the likelihood that Jitsudō improvised his own variations as he told and retold the story of the Akō rōnin, and this may be the case with the two examples from this category that we will introduce here.

The first example pertains to the story of Ōishi Kuranosuke's mistress Okaru お軽, who would shortly gain lasting fame as a central character in *Kanadehon chūshingura*. Although it remains unclear whether her name was really "Okaru" (or "Karu"), it seems to be established historical fact that Kuranosuke had a mistress in his final months in Kyoto, before leaving for Edo in the tenth month of 1702. The most revealing evidence is to be found in a letter that he wrote to a priest in Kyoto on 1702.11.25, just twenty days before the attack on Kira, in which he sought assistance in providing for the impending "Nijō birth" (*Nijō*

⁴⁹ *Akō seigi*, p. 70.

⁵⁰ Miyazawa 1999, pp. 118–28; summarized in Smith 2003, pp. 18–19.

⁵¹ Yamamoto 2002, pp. 31–34.

⁵² See, for example, the entry in *Akō gishi jiten*, pp. 344–45.

shussan 二条出産), an apparent reference to Okaru's family residence at Nijō Teramachi 二条寺町 and to her pregnancy by Ōishi.⁵³ Remarkably, however, we have been unable to locate mention of Okaru in any of the early chronicles of the Akō incident, a circumstance that suggests that her existence was known to only a few people. The first real detail about her appears in *Sekijō gishinden* and was doubtless the result of Katashima's personal investigations in the Kyoto area. Here she is clearly identified as Karu 軽, the daughter of the merchant Nimonjiya Jirōzaemon 二文字屋次郎左衛門, and Katashima provides a long and poetic description of Kuranosuke's farewell to her just before he left for Edo.⁵⁴

Jitsudō mentioned Okaru, according to Norinaga's account, on two separate occasions. In the first he related that Kuranosuke "dressed her in an elegant outfit and strolled around the city with her," as part of his general dissipation and that she helped him find the sizes of the other rōnin in order to prepare their dress for the attack (details that were wholly absent from Katashima's version). In a passage that Norinaga unfortunately "abbreviates" (*ryaku* 略), Jitsudō later evidently continued the story, relating how "Okaru cut her hair, gave it to Kuranosuke, and killed herself." This report of the suicide of Okaru is absent from *Sekijō gishinden* and, as far as we have been able to ascertain, does not appear in any later versions. Once Okaru became popular on the puppet and then kabuki stage in 1748–1749, in a role that had her narrowly avoid death at the hand of her brother Heiemon 平右衛門, it is doubtful that subsequent storytellers would have wanted to have her die by her own hand. It is quite possible that Jitsudō's telling of the suicide of Okaru represents a version of the story that existed for only a short time, and was conceivably of his own invention.

A second example of an episode that appears only in Jitsudō's account is one of the most intriguing in his entire narrative: how the rōnin discovered their enemy, not in a charcoal storage shed as all previous narratives had described it—in accord with primary historical documents, particularly the first-hand accounts of the attack by the rōnin themselves—but rather by way of a secret underground tunnel leading to an escape route in the garden. Where did Jitsudō get this intriguing story, and why do we find it nowhere else? We will probably never know, but it remains a tantalizing example of the ways in which major details of the story of the Akō avengers could undergo sudden changes for no apparent reason. We do know, incidentally, thanks to recent archaeological discoveries, that underground storage rooms, if not tunnels, were quite widespread in the city of Edo.⁵⁵ But the idea of chasing Kira through such a tunnel into the garden is clearly the work of a particular imagination, maybe indeed that of Jitsudō himself.⁵⁶

⁵³ For the letter, see Akō-shi 1987, vol. 3, pp. 338–39. The letter is signed with Ōishi's alias of Ikeda Kuemon 池田久右衛門; the addressee is unclear in this edition, but is identified in *Akō gishi jiten*, p. 350, as Shōsan 証讚.

⁵⁴ *Sekijō gishinden*, pp. 239, 257, 264.

⁵⁵ Koizumi 1990 and Ozawa 1998. See also Vaporis 1998, p. 95.

⁵⁶ For other examples of details apparently found only in Jitsudō's account, see notes 37, 40, 46, 55, and 62 to the translation.

Concluding Thoughts

The record that the young Norinaga has left us of the priest Jitsudō's narration of the Akō vendetta is important first and foremost for the glimpse that it provides of a medium and a genre within the history of Chūshingura narratives that is otherwise almost wholly unavailable until the later nineteenth century. Even accepting the many limitations of the fourteen-year-old youth's transcription of the preacher's account—its errors, omissions, and abbreviations—it still affords us a fascinating sampling of both the style and the content of such oral performances. It serves to remind us of the tremendous importance of oral (and aural, reading from written texts) narration within the broader world of textual transmission in the Tokugawa period.

A review of some of the ways in which Jitsudō's narration relates both to earlier and later narrations that survive as written texts makes it apparent that it stands at a historical crossroads in the evolution of the Chūshingura phenomenon. In the autumn of 1744, when Jitsudō arrived in Matsusaka, the popularity of the Akō Gishi looked to be at an ebb. The great boom in both kabuki and jōruri of 1710 had been followed by only sporadic further plays on the Akō theme, most recently in *Chūshin kogane no tanzaku* 忠臣金短冊, a popular jōruri of 1732. Quasi-historical accounts had come almost to a complete halt after the publication (and immediate banning) of *Sekijō gishinden* in 1719, and in the world of fiction as well, Akō-related novels were sparse in the 1740s. We should remember, however, that one full generation had now passed since the Akō incident, which may have created the potential for a new way of understanding it. Nakamura Yukihiko made the revealing observation, in connection with the evolution of *jitsuroku* versions of a closely related historical episode (that of Yanagisawa Yoshiyasu 柳沢吉保, 1658–1714, the chamberlain of Tsunayoshi), that forty years after an event is just about the right interval “both for recording the historical truth and for reconstituting it as fiction” (*shinjitsu o tsutaeru ni mo, kyōgi o kamaeru ni mo* 真実を伝えるにも、虚偽を構えるにも).⁵⁷ Jitsudō's narration in Matsusaka, by striking coincidence, took place just over forty years after the denouement of the Akō incident.

From hindsight, of course, we know that Jitsudō's performance in 1744 came just four years before the production that would forever transform the reputation of the Akō Gishi in Japanese culture, the opening of the jōruri *Kanadehon chūshingura* in Osaka in the autumn of 1748. What Jitsudō's performance reveals is that despite the apparent doldrums of Akō text production in the 1740s, in fact a vital tradition of oral transmission existed in precisely such traveling storytellers. This tradition may be hypothesized to have been critical both to the creation of *Kanadehon* and to its phenomenal popularity.

Yet we must also remember that the world of cultural productions about the Akō Gishi was divided into two different spheres. On the one hand were the “public” performances on the puppet and kabuki stages and in printed novels,

⁵⁷ Nakamura 1968, p. 84. This observation is quoted by Tanabe 1999 (no. 544), p. 3.

all of which were obliged to disguise the real names of the historical protagonists, no matter how superficially, and which were thus generally perceived as a world of fantasy. Parallel to this and never wholly apart from it was what might be called “quasi-public” production, in the form of manuscript *jitsuroku* narratives that circulated through book peddlers, and of oral performances like that of Jitsudō that were held at temples, shrines, or markets. Here the real names of the Akō rōnin were used, and the general presumption among the audiences was that the events described, however embellished in the telling, had really happened in the not-so-distant past. The earliest manuscript chronicles tended to be written as serious attempts to record actual events, although, as we have seen, they were replete with reports of rumor and alternative explanations. A turning point was reached with Katashima’s *Sekijō gishinden* of 1719, a work that had one foot in the “public” sector (as a printed book, although immediately banned) and one in the “quasi-public” sector in its use of the real names. As such it may be said to have aspired both to historical accuracy and to stirring entertainment.

From the very first accounts of the Akō vendetta, of course, the line between history “truth” (*jitsu* 実) and fictional “fabrication” (*kyo* 虚) was blurred, but it became even more so as time passed. In terms of the expectations and reactions of audiences (whether viewers or listeners or readers), it seems best to conceive of a vague and frequently shifting continuum from *jitsu* to *kyo*, rather than an absolute opposition of “truth” and “fiction.” Even though we can concede a rough classification of sources between the two extremes of “more historically verisimilar” and “less historically verisimilar,” it seems that many tellers and writers of such stories, particularly in the wake of *Kanadehon chūshingura*, did not share modern anxieties about “facts” and objective “truth.” More relevant perhaps, was a concern, conscious or not, to preserve a delicate balance between the need to entertain the listeners on the one hand and to persuade them of the verisimilitude of the tale on the other. What ultimately is of the greatest historical interest, however, is the changing processes by which meaning was disseminated. In this area, neglected texts like that of Norinaga’s written record of Jitsudō’s performance provide much food for thought.

REFERENCES

Akō gijin roku

Muro Kyūsō 室鳩巢. *Akō gijin roku* 赤穂義人録. In NST 27.

Akō gishi den

Motoori Norinaga 本居宣長. *Akō gishi den* 赤穂義士伝. In MNZ 20.

Akō gishi jiten

Akō Gishi Jiten Kankōkai 赤穂義士辞典刊行会, ed. *Akō gishi jiten* 赤穂義士辞典. Kobe: Akō Gishi Jiten Kankōkai, 1972.

Akō seigi

Misumi Kan 三角寛, ed. *Akō seigi* 赤穂精義. Bonenji, 1970.

Akō-shi 1987

Akō-shi Sōmubu Shishi Hensanshitsu 赤穂市総務部市史編さん室, ed. *Chūshingura* 忠臣蔵. 7 vols. Akō: Akō-shi, 1987.

Akō shōshūki

Sugimoto Yoshichika 杉本義鄰. *Akō shōshūki* 赤穂鍾秀記. In vol. 2 of Nabeta 1910–1911.

Bitō 2003

Bitō Masahide. “The Akō Incident, 1701–1703,” MN 58:2 (Summer 2003), pp. 149–70.

Chūō Gishikai 1931

Chūō Gishikai 中央義士会, ed. *Akō gishi shiryō* 赤穂義士史料. 3 vols. Yūzankaku, 1931.

Chūsei gokanroku

Ogawa Tsunemitsu 小川恒充. *Chūsei gokanroku* 忠誠後鑑録. In vol. 3 of Nabeta 1910–1911.

Coleman 1996

Joyce Coleman. *Public Reading and the Reading Public in Late Medieval England and France*. Cambridge University Press, 1996.

Ekisui renbeiroku

Ekisui renbeiroku 易水連袂録. In vol. 3 of Chūō Gishikai 1931 (books 1–4) and Saitō 1974 (books 1–10).

Fukumoto 1914

Fukumoto Nichinan 福本日南. *Genroku kaikyo shinsōroku* 元禄快挙真相録. Tōadō Shoten, 1914.

Genette 1982

Gérard Genette. *Palimpsestes: La littérature au second degré*. Paris: Seuil, 1982.

Hasegawa 1994a

Hasegawa Tsuyoshi 長谷川強. “Kanadehon chūshingura kō: Sono seiritsu to ukiyozōshi” 「仮名手本忠臣蔵」考: その成立と浮世草子. *Gakuen* 学苑 650 (February 1994), pp. 1–13

Hasegawa 1994b

Hasegawa Tsuyoshi. “Ukiyozōshi to jitsuroku, kōdan: Akō jiken, Ōoka seidan no baai” 浮世草子と実録、講談: 赤穂事件、大岡政談の場合. *Kokugakuin zasshi* 国学院雑誌 95:12 (December 1994), pp. 60–72.

Hida 1986

Hida Kōzō 肥田皓三. “Genroku jidai no shomin geinō” 元禄時代の庶民芸能. In *Kamigata no bunka: Genroku no bungaku to geinō* 上方の文化: 元禄の文学と芸能, ed. Ōsaka Joshi Daigaku Kokubungaku Kenkyūshitsu 大阪女子大学国文学研究室. Ōsaka: Kamigata Bunko, 1986.

Hyōdō 1995

Hyōdō Hiromi 兵藤裕己. *Taiheiki “yomi” no kanōsei: Rekishi to iu monogatari* 太平記「よみ」の可能性: 歴史という物語. Kōdansha, 1995.

Imao 1987

Imao Tetsuya 今尾哲也. *Kira no kubi: Chūshingura to imajinēshon* 吉良の首: 忠臣蔵とイマジネーション. Heibonsha, 1987.

Imayō heta dangi

Jōkanbō Kōa 静観坊好阿. *Imayō heta dangi* 当世下手談義. In SNKBT 81.

Iwata 1999

Iwata Takashi 岩田隆. *Motoori Norinaga no shōgai: Sono gaku no kiseki* 本居宣長の生涯: その学の軌跡. Ibunsha, 1999.

Jōfuku 1980

Jōfuku Isamu 城福勇. *Motoori Norinaga* 本居宣長. Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1980.

Kaisekiki

Kaisekiki 介石記. In vol. 2 of Nabeta 1910–1911.

Keene 1971

Donald Keene, trans. *Chūshingura: The Treasury of Loyal Retainers*, by Takeda Izumo, Miyoshi Shōraku, and Namiki Senryū. Columbia University Press, 1971.

Kitagawa 1985

Kitagawa Tadahiko 北川忠彦. “Teraoka Heiemon no seiritsu” 寺岡平右衛門の成立. *Geinōshi kenkyū* 芸能史研究 90 (July 1985), pp. 16–30.

Koizumi 1990

Koizumi Hiroshi 古泉弘. *Edo no ana* 江戸の穴. Kashiwa Shobō, 1990.

Maruya 1984

Maruya Saiichi 丸谷才一. *Chūshingura to wa nani ka* 忠臣蔵とは何か. Kōdansha, 1984.

Mitford 1871

A. B. Mitford. “The Forty Seven Rōnins.” In *Tales of Old Japan*. London: Macmillan and Co., 1871.

Miyazawa 1999

Miyazawa Seiichi 宮澤誠一. *Akō rōshi: Tsumugidasareru “Chūshingura”* 赤穂浪士: 紡ぎ出される「忠臣蔵」. Sanseidō, 1999.

Miyazawa 2001

Miyazawa Seiichi. *Kindai Nihon to “Chūshingura” gensō* 近代日本と「忠臣蔵」幻想. Aoki Shoten, 2001.

MNZ

Motoori Norinaga zenshū 本居宣長全集. Ed. Ōno Susumu 大野晋 and Ōkubo Tadashi 大久保正. 22 vols. Chikuma Shobō, 1968–1975.

Motoori Norinaga Kinenkan 2001

Motoori Norinaga Kinenkan 本居宣長記念館, ed. *Motoori Norinaga jiten* 本居宣長事典. Tōkyōdō Shuppan, 2001.

Nabeta 1910–1911

Nabeta Shōzan 鍋田晶山, ed. *Akō gijin sansho* 赤穂義人纂書. 3 vols. Kokusho Kankōkai, 1910–1911.

Nakamura 1968

Nakamura Yukihiko 中村幸彦. “Yanagisawa sōdō jitsuroku no tenka” 柳沢騒動実録の転化. *Gobun kenkyū* 語文研究 26 (October 1968), pp. 1–8. Repr. in vol. 10 of *Nakamura Yukihiko chojutsushū* 中村幸彦著述集. Chūō Kōron Sha, 1983.

Nakamura 1975

Nakamura Yukihiko. “Taiheiki no kōshakushitachi” 太平記の講釈師たち. In *Nihon no koten: Taiheiki* 日本の古典: 太平記. Sekai Bunkasha, 1975. Repr. in vol. 10 of *Nakamura Yukihiko chojutsushū* 中村幸彦著述集. Chūō Kōron Sha, 1983.

Nakamura 1984

Nakamura Yukihiko. “Gishiden mono” 義士伝物. In vol. 2 of *Nihon koten bungaku daijiten* 日本古典文学大辞典. Iwanami Shoten, 1984.

Nobuhiro 1987

Nobuhiro Shinji 延広真治. “Taiheiki-yomi” 太平記読み. In vol. 8 of *Kokushi daijiten* 国史大事典. Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1987.

Noguchi 1994

Noguchi Takehiko 野口武彦. *Chūshingura: Akō jiken, shijitsu no nikusei* 忠臣蔵: 赤穂事件・史実の肉声. Chikuma Shobō, 1994.

Okado Denpachirō oboegaki

Okado Denpachirō 多門伝八郎. *Okado Denpachirō oboegaki* 多門伝八郎覚書. In NST 27.

Ozawa 1998

Ozawa Emiko 小沢詠美子. *Saigai toshi Edo to chikashitsu* 災害都市江戸と地下室. Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1998.

Saitō 1974

Saitō Shigeru 齊藤茂, ed. *Ekisui renbeiroku: Genroku 16-nen chojutsu (zen)* 易水連袂録: 元禄16年著述(全). Nihon Sakimori Kyōkai Hotta Bunko Hanpubu, 1974.

Sekijō gishinden

Katashima Shin'en 片島深淵. *Sekijō gishinden* 赤城義臣伝. Hiyoshimaru Shoin, 1909.

Sekiyama 1992

Sekiyama Kazuo 関山和夫. *Sekkyō no rekishi: Bukkyō to wagei* 説教の歴史: 仏教と話芸. Hakuishi, 1992.

Smith 2003

Henry D. Smith II. “The Capacity of Chūshingura.” MN 58:1 (Spring 2003), pp. 1–42.

Smith forthcoming

Henry D. Smith II. “The Trouble with Terasaka: The Forty-Seventh Rōnin and the Chūshingura Imagination.” Forthcoming in *Nichibunken Japan Review*.

Takahashi 2002

Takahashi Keiichi 高橋圭一. *Jitsuroku no kenkyū: Suji o tōsu bungaku* 実録の研究: 筋を通す文学. Osaka: Seibundō, 2002.

Tanabe 1999

Tanabe Kōji 田邊孝治. “Motoori Norinaga no gishiden” 本居宣長の義士伝. *Kōdan kenkyū* 講談研究 540–550 (February–November 1999).

Vaporis 1998

Constantine Vaporis. "Digging for Edo: Archaeology and Japan's Premodern Urban Past." MN 53:1 (Spring 1998), pp. 73–104.

Wakao 1999

Wakao Masaki 若尾政希. "*Taiheiki-yomi*" no jidai: Kinsei seiji shisōshi no kōsō 「太平記読み」の時代: 近世政治思想史の構想. Heibonsha, 1999.

Yamamoto 2002

Yamamoto Takashi 山本卓. "Gishiden jitsuroku to 'Ehon chūshingura'" 義士伝実録と『絵本忠臣蔵』. *Bungaku* 文学 3:3 (May–June 2002), pp. 27–39.

Zaikyō nikki

Zaikyō nikki 在京日記. In MNZ 16.



The Story of the Loyal Samurai of Akō

Author(s): Motoori Norinaga and Federico Marcon

Source: *Monumenta Nipponica*, Vol. 58, No. 4 (Winter, 2003), pp. 467-493

Published by: Sophia University

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25066253>

Accessed: 24/01/2009 13:54

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>. JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use provides, in part, that unless you have obtained prior permission, you may not download an entire issue of a journal or multiple copies of articles, and you may use content in the JSTOR archive only for your personal, non-commercial use.

Please contact the publisher regarding any further use of this work. Publisher contact information may be obtained at <http://www.jstor.org/action/showPublisher?publisherCode=sophia>.

Each copy of any part of a JSTOR transmission must contain the same copyright notice that appears on the screen or printed page of such transmission.

JSTOR is a not-for-profit organization founded in 1995 to build trusted digital archives for scholarship. We work with the scholarly community to preserve their work and the materials they rely upon, and to build a common research platform that promotes the discovery and use of these resources. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.



Sophia University is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Monumenta Nipponica*.

<http://www.jstor.org>

The Story of the Loyal Samurai of Akō

MOTOORI NORINAGA

Translated by
FEDERICO MARCON

I have abbreviated a great deal, and am not recording everything.¹
I am writing down, just as my foolish ears heard it, the story told by the priest Jitsudō 実道 during a series of sermons at Jukyōji 樹敬寺 temple from the ninth month of Enkyō 延享 1 [1744], about how the retainers of Asano Takumi no kami Naganori 浅野内匠頭長[矩], lord of Ako castle in the province of Harima,²

THE TRANSLATOR is a Ph.D. candidate in Japanese history at Columbia University. He would like to thank Akiko Takeuchi of Columbia University for her assistance with the translation and Henry D. Smith II for guidance with the annotation.

The translation is based on the printed version of the original text included in MNZ 20, pp. 585–600. In an effort to convey the features of the original, presently known by the title *Akō gishi den* 赤穂義士伝, the editors of the printed version have noted interlinear interpolations, excisions, and corrections made by Norinaga. Here I have used parentheses to indicate interpolations. Where excisions and corrections are significant enough to affect the meaning, I have put them as well in parentheses and added a footnote. As mentioned in the introduction by Henry D. Smith and myself to this translation, Norinaga's text contains many irregularities and inconsistencies in orthography and the transcriptions of names. At the first occurrence of a proper name, I have given the orthography used there but I have not attempted to indicate later variations. In a few instances of irregularities in kanji usage, the standard kanji have been given in brackets. As Norinaga renders many names largely in kana, in such cases I have provided the kanji version in brackets or a footnote.

Norinaga demarcates sections of the narrative by double and single circles (for an example of the former, see the photograph of the opening lines in figure 1 of the introduction, p. xxx). I have tried to convey this segmentation through the addition of space between paragraphs, but have not distinguished between the two types of circle.

Full names, dates, and other details about the individual forty-seven rōnin themselves have been omitted here; these may be found in Akō-shi 1987, vol. 3, pp. 746–47. The bibliographic information for works cited here may be found in the list of references appended to the preceding article.

¹ As can be seen in the photograph of the opening lines (figure 1 of the introduction, pp. 442–43), these opening provisos appear set off on a separate line.

² As mentioned in the introduction, the name of the domain, located in the southwestern part of present-day Hyōgo prefecture, is today usually pronounced Akō. Norinaga, however, consistently renders it as Ako, and in the translation I have adhered to his reading.

took revenge on the enemy of their master under the leadership of Ōishi Kuranosuke Fujiwara no Yoshio 大いしらの介藤原のよしを.³ Since there are things I forgot to ask, however, circumstances of the events are sometimes not clear. There are also parts that I omitted, and places where I forgot, but I went ahead and wrote it down. There are said to be some twenty different accounts that record these events. The one related [by Jitsudō] is said to be based on a book of Ōishi's letters.

It all started the third month of the fourteenth year of Genroku 元禄 [禄; 1701], when Asano Takumi no kami Naganori, lord of Ako castle in the province of Harima, was appointed⁴ to the duty of hosting the imperial envoys (the former grand councilors Yanagihara 柳原 and Takano 高野)⁵ coming to Edo from the capital. Since Lord Kira Kōzuke no suke Yoshihide きら上野佐よしひで⁶ was well informed about such matters, all of those appointed to these duties were supposed to ask him about the proper procedures. Lord Takumi no kami thus also consulted him about what to do. Some among his retainers suggested to Takumi no kami that it would be appropriate to offer a present to Lord Kōzuke no suke when asking his advice, but Lord Takumi no kami said that, no, to do so would in fact be disrespectful to the one being consulted. To offer a gift at the first meeting was not proper. It would be more suitable to send a present later, after the consultation. He thus did not send a gift to Kōzuke no suke. But Kōzuke no suke was a greedy person, and he did not instruct Takumi no kami correctly and caused him repeated humiliation.

Prior to this, one night Lord Katō Tōtōmi no kami 加藤遠江守⁷ had paid a visit to Lord Takumi no kami's mansion. He had told Takumi no kami directly that it was customary for everybody appointed to such duties to ask Lord Kōzuke no suke for advice. He then had added that he wished to warn Takumi no kami about something. Handing over his two swords, he said, "Kōzuke no suke is a greedy person. If he does not receive a substantial gift, he acts offensively. In such a case, don't make the mistake of getting angry! I, too, have been insulted by him. I was tempted to strike him, but trying to stay calm and keeping in mind that it

³ 大石内蔵助藤原良雄.

⁴ The words "were appointed" are accompanied by a katakana interpolation, "this is known as the *kyōō no ichibokushi*"; *kyōō* is clearly 饗応 (reception), but the meaning of *ichibokushi* is unclear.

⁵ Yanagihara Saki no gondainagon Sukekado 柳原前大納言資廉 (1644–1712) and Takano Saki no chūnagon Yasuharu 高野前中納言保春 (1650–1712), envoys to Edo of Emperor Higashiyama 東山 (1675–1709; r. 1687–1709).

⁶ Kira's given name was Yoshinaka 義央 (also read Yoshihisa); the error of writing it as 義英 (Yoshihide) began as early as Muro Kyūsō's 室鳩巢 *Akō gijin roku* 赤穂義人録 of 1703 (see p. 274), and was widespread in the early chronicles of the Akō incident.

⁷ Earlier sources reported this to be Katō Tōtōmi no kami Yasuzane 泰実; see *Akō gijin roku*, p. 276; and *Sekijō gishinden*, pp. 5–7. But as a note to *Akō gijin roku* in NST 27 points out, Yasuzane must be an error for Yasutsune 泰恒 (1657–1715), daimyo of Ōzu 大洲 domain (in present-day Ehime prefecture) from 1675 until his death. Yasuzane was a monk and the younger brother of Yasutsune. The whole story is probably apocryphal.

was an important occasion, restrained myself. However he insults you and however much you feel you can no longer bear it, you, too, should keep your wits and bear with it.” Having said this, he took back his swords and left.

The day before the imperial envoys were to arrive at Zōjōji 僧[増]上寺,⁸ Takumi no kami asked Kōzuke no suke, “Is there an established form for readying the lodging for the imperial envoys?”

“No,” Kōzuke no suke replied, “There is no particular form. Just leave everything as it is.”

But Takumi no kami later heard from Lord Date Ukyō no suke 伊達右京佐,⁹ who had been appointed to the same duty, that Kōzuke no suke had ordered that the walls should be replastered and the tatami mats changed. Lord Takumi no kami was greatly surprised and angered. He had to replaster the walls and change more than three hundred tatami in just one night. Such humiliations were repeatedly inflicted upon him.

For the ceremony of the shogun’s reply to the emperor, Takumi no kami once again asked Kōzuke no suke for advice: “For the ceremony of the reply, should I go to the castle dressed in *kamishimo* 上下[袴], or in *shōzoku* 装束?”¹⁰

“You will be going together with Lord Ukyō,” Kōzuke no suke replied. “Do the same as he does.”

When Lord Ukyō came to get him, Takumi no kami saw that he was wearing the usual *kamishimo*. Takumi no kami therefore also wore the same dress to the castle. Once there, however, Lord Ukyō changed his clothes and put on *shōzoku*. Takumi no kami was astonished. How was it, he thought, that Kōzuke no suke should bear him such a grudge as to insult him like this. How detestable! How mortifying! Why, he wondered bitterly, had Kōzuke no suke not told him to bring *shōzoku* to change into at the castle. He hurried back to the main gate, where his retainers were waiting for him, and ordered them to go back to his residence to get his *shōzoku*, so that he could change his dress for the ceremony.

Then, just when the imperial envoys were about to arrive, Lord Takumi no kami saw that the laces of Lord Date Ukyō’s ceremonial hat were woven of twisted thread (*yorihibo*[*mo*] ヨリヒボ [縹紐]), while his were the usual flat laces (*uchihibo*[*mo*] ウチヒボ [打紐]). He asked Lord Sakyō about this. “Lord Kōzuke no suke told me that to wear flat laces would be disrespectful toward the imperial envoys and that I should wear twisted laces instead,” was the reply.

⁸ A Buddhist temple of the Jōdo school, Zōjōji was one of the main shogunal temples in Edo and housed the mausoleum of the second shogun, Hidetada 秀忠. Such temples were regularly used as lodgings for imperial and foreign envoys.

⁹ This was Date Sakyō no suke Muratoyo 村豊 (1682–1737), daimyo of Yoshida 吉田 domain (in modern-day Ehime prefecture). Norinaga first wrote the title correctly as Sakyō 左京, but then crossed it out and changed it to Ukyō. Below he tends to use Ukyō but in one instance transcribes the title as Sakyō.

¹⁰ *Kamishimo* was the ordinary ceremonial dress of the samurai; it consisted of a *kataginu* 肩衣 (a sleeveless waistcoat with wide crested shoulders) and hakama of the same color as the under-robe. *Shōzoku* was the round-collared court dress worn for more formal occasions.

Lord Takumi no kami, greatly angered, asked himself why Kōzuke no suke should humiliate him so. How detestable! How mortifying! He thought he could no longer put up with it, but he had not forgotten what Lord Katō Tōtōmi no kami had told him, and he struggled to hide his anger and to calm himself. He took out from his bosom a piece of paper and twisted it into a string. Then, (cutting his finger,) he dyed the paper lace with his blood and used it in place of the flat lace of his hat.

In addition to such humiliations, Kōzuke no suke told every person he encountered that, despite his detailed instructions, Takumi no kami was ignoring his directions and simply acting of his own accord. Being slandered in this way, Asano Takumi no kami Naganori finally could bear it no longer and struck Kira Kōzuke no suke. But because his sword hit a metallic piece inside Kira's hat, he did not succeed in killing him. Kōzuke no suke quickly ran away and escaped. Kajikawa Yosōbyōe 梶川與よさう兵へ¹¹ grabbed Takumi no kami from behind and restrained him. (As a result of Takumi no kami's breach of the etiquette of the castle),¹² there was a great uproar among the retainers of the daimyo, and word that there had been a fight at the castle spread quickly throughout Edo.

But as soon as people heard that the fight was between Asano Takumi no kami and Kōzuke no suke, the uproar quieted down.

On account of his breach of the etiquette of the castle, Lord Takumi no kami was first put into the custody of Lord Tamura Ukyō 田村右京,¹³ and then ordered to commit seppuku the same day.

Takumi no kami's retainers, Hayami Tōzaemon ハヤミタウザヘモン [早水藤左衛門] and Kayano Sanpei かや野さん平 [茅野三平] hurried together back to Ako in Harima, changing horses along the way and not stopping to rest.¹⁴ They covered a distance of more than 150 *ri* 里¹⁵ in just three days and a half.

The day Lord Takumi no kami was ordered to commit seppuku, his retainers all came to receive their lord's remains. Waiting in the room next to the one where he was kept in custody, they begged many times to be allowed to meet their lord one last time, but to no avail.¹⁶ Takumi no kami, knowing that only one thin

¹¹ Kajikawa Yosobyōe Yoriteru 梶川与惣兵衛頼照 (1647–1723). For his record of the incident, see *Kajikawa-shi nikki* 梶川氏日記; in Akō-shi 1987, vol. 3, pp. 5–9. The name by which Kajikawa was commonly known (his *tsūshō* 通称 or *yobina* 呼び名) is usually read today as Yosōbei or Yosobei. Norinaga, however, indicates with furigana here the reading of Yosōbyōe. Below, both where furigana is provided and where it is not, I have transcribed names with –兵へ or –兵衛 as –hyōe (–byōe).

¹² The editors of Norinaga's text indicate that he crossed out the phrase in parentheses.

¹³ Tamura Ukyō taifu Tateaki 田村右京大夫建顕 (1656–1708), was daimyo of Ichinoseki 一関, in present-day Iwate prefecture.

¹⁴ As Tanabe 1999 (no. 541), p. 1, points out, the messengers in fact went by palanquin rather than horseback; express horses had apparently been prohibited under Tsunayoshi's animal protection laws.

¹⁵ One *ri* was a little less than four kilometers.

¹⁶ A scene very similar to this appears in act 4 of *Kanadehon chūshingura*; see Keene 1971, p. 70. The inspiration may have come from the memorandum by Okado Denpachirō 多門伝八郎, a

paper door separated him from his retainers, raised his voice and said: “Although I am ready to commit seppuku, I regret not being able to kill Kōzuke no suke. Even after I die, this regret will stay with me. I will hold this grudge forever, however many times I may be reborn and however many realms of existence I may pass through, until I see the severed head of Kōzuke no suke.” (He then held up in reverence the sword given him by the shogun) and cut his belly. Isoda Budayū いそ[磯]田武大夫 thereupon struck off his head.¹⁷

In accordance with the procedure of the time for conducting seppuku, a square cotton quilt three *shaku* 尺 long on each side was spread out.¹⁸ One man was stationed at each of the four corners of the quilt, and a folding screen was set behind it. The person committing seppuku sat on the quilt. After his head had fallen, the four men stationed at the corners wrapped his body up in the quilt and put it into a coffin, around which they set the screen. The retainers of the deceased could then collect the body and bury it. He was given the posthumous name of Reikōinden Suimōgenri Daikōji れいかう院殿すいもうげんり大居士[冷光院殿吹毛元利].

At Ako castle, all the retainers, beginning with Ōishi Kuranosuke Fujiwara no Yoshio, were busy with their daily duties in the absence of their lord. Ōishi Kuranosuke had many things to take care of, but that day he was feeling anxious. When he left the castle, he saw that bees had made a huge nest under the eaves of the gate and that they were fighting fiercely against some hornets. At that sight, he felt even more anxious.¹⁹ Walking down from the castle, Kuranosuke looked in the direction of Osaka and saw two horsemen racing toward the castle, raising a cloud of dust. When they got nearer, he recognized them to be Hayami Tōzaemon and Kayano Sanpei. The two men fell from their horses as if dead. Hurrying toward them, Kuranosuke raised them up and asked what had happened; they told him the situation.

Ōishi Kuranosuke was stunned. Since new reports might come any minute, he stayed awake all night. The following morning near dawn, Hara Sōemon はらさう右衛門 [原惣右衛門], too, arrived by horseback in great haste. He, too, appeared on the brink of death from exhaustion. Kuranosuke gave him something to drink to revive him and pulled him up from the ground. When he came to, the tears coursed down his face in torrents. He took out from his bosom a slip of paper on which was written the posthumous name of their lord and, sobbing, handed it to Ōishi Kuranosuke.

bakufu inspector who witnessed Asano's seppuku and reported that Kataoka Gengoemon 片岡源五右衛門, one of the retainers closest to Naganori, begged to be permitted a final farewell, and was permitted to view his master from a separate room; see *Okado Denpachirō oboegaki*, pp. 171–72. The Okado memorandum seems not to have been widely known in the early years after the incident, however, and none of the early chronicles mention this episode.

¹⁷ Or Butayū, bakufu inspector (*metsuke* 目付). The editors indicate that Norinaga crossed out the phrase in parentheses in the previous sentence.

¹⁸ One *shaku* is 30.3 centimeters.

¹⁹ For this story, see the introduction, pp. 454–55. Here Norinaga has simply *hachi* 蜂 (bee), not *kobachi* 小蜂 (wasp) as in *Sekijō gishinden* and *Akō seigi*.

(FORGOT)²⁰

The retainers all gathered at the castle. Ōishi Kuranosuke went up to the upper level of the room and addressed the assembled retainers. “Our lord, Takumi no kami, was ordered to commit seppuku because he had acted disrespectfully inside the shogun’s castle. He was granted a sword to disembowel himself. Since he has left no heirs, it is certain that the government will send a military force to take possession of the castle. When that moment comes, should we ultimately agree to give up the castle? Or should we plan to make this castle our tomb and fight to the death?”

Among the retainers, there were those who thought that they should all commit seppuku, accompanying their lord to the afterlife. Others preferred to live and sought to run away. One of the retainers, Okuno Shōgen ヲクノ野将監, said: “Kuranosuke, you should tell us what to do.”²¹

“Under normal circumstances,” Kuranosuke replied, “it is the lord who gives his opinion first, then the councilors discuss the matter; afterwards the rest follow in turn. But now, it seems to me, that kind of distinction no longer applies. Who will serve as my right arm when we attack Kira Kōzuke no suke?” And he looked around at the retainers.

(FORGOT)

“Today we had better leave the castle and go home. Tomorrow, whoever among you thinks that we should die fighting should come to the castle.”

Everybody left the castle.

The following day, about 130 men gathered in the castle. Among them were some who, in despair over the situation, thought that they ought to cut their belly right away. They gathered earlier than the others. Kuranosuke began to speak. “I have an idea,” he said. “Considering the position of Lord Matsudaira Aki no kami 松平安芸守²² and others of the main branch of the Asano house, and considering that Lord Daigaku 大学,²³ the younger brother of our lord, Takumi no kami, is presently under house arrest, we should first send a petition to Edo. Even if it should not be granted, we should try to secure the succession of the Asano family.” He thereupon sent Tagawa たがわ and Tsukioka つきおか²⁴ to Edo to submit the petition.

²⁰ Norinaga inserted a bracketed *wasure*, *wasure nari*, or simply *wa* to indicate points he had forgotten. See figure 1 in the introduction, second line from the end.

²¹ Okuno Shōgen Sadayoshi 奥野将監定良 (1646–1727) held the position of *kumigashira* 組頭 with a 1,000-koku stipend. He was related to Ōishi Kuranosuke through his mother and was a member of the league until dropping out in the eighth month of 1702.

²² Asano Aki no kami Tsunanaga 浅野安芸守綱長 (1659–1708), daimyo of Hiroshima 広島. Tsunanaga, like various other daimyo mentioned below, had been granted the honor of use of the surname Matsudaira, the original name of the Tokugawa house. Norinaga follows the standard convention of referring to him by this honorary surname rather than his original surname of Asano.

²³ Asano Daigaku Nagahiro 浅野大学長広 (1670–1734).

²⁴ Tagawa (or Takawa or Ōkawa) Kuzaemon (or Kyūzaemon) 多川九左衛門 (400 koku) and Tsukioka Jiemon 月岡治右衛門 (300 koku) both initially joined the league of revenge in Akō but later dropped out.

While some were satisfied with this proposal, others were not. After hearing Kuranosuke's words, a man named Ōno Kurobyōe 大野くろ兵へ protested: "If Lord Daigaku is granted the right to continue the house, we could all continue to serve him without disruption. At first I thought that all those who did not come to the castle would lose their stipends, and I planned to gather here early in the morning, but unfortunately I was late because of some important duty. Now I am going to kill myself!" Kuranosuke, laughing to himself, tried to stop him, saying that the two messengers were now on their way to Edo with the petition. But Kurobyōe would not listen to him. "I will commit seppuku here and now," he screamed, "and accompany my lord to the other world!" Somehow people dissuaded him. It was because he was this sort of person that he later made a fool of himself.²⁵ (FORGOT)

Eventually everybody left the castle. Kuranosuke, too, went home. He had a son by a concubine; the son's name was Chikara Yoshikane チカラヨシカネ.²⁶ After Kuranosuke had retired to his bedroom, Chikara pulled out from his father's chest pocket the piece of paper on which was written the posthumous name of Lord Takumi no kami. Thinking of their indebtedness to their lord, he grieved deeply. He wanted to follow his master to the other world, and was about to disembowel himself. But then his father appeared from behind him. Realizing his son's feelings, Kuranosuke stopped him and said: "Although I did not say this to anyone, I will not rest until I take the head of Kira Kōzuke no suke and offer it at the grave of my lord to assuage his bitter regret."²⁷

He wrote down his name, Ōishi Kuranosuke Fujiwara no Yoshio, and the name of his son, Chikara Yoshikane. They cut their little fingers and sealed the paper with their blood. (Thus the first two of the forty-seven retainers who would attack Kōzuke no suke were decided).

Later when another meeting was held at the castle to sign a vow [to fight to protect the castle], Ōno Kurobyōe, Itō Goemon 伊藤五右衛門,²⁸ and other cowardly samurai ran away. (At that time there were about fifty men remaining.)

(FORGOT)

The messengers sent to Edo submitted the petition to Toda Uneme no kami

²⁵ Ōno Kurobyōe, or Kurobei 大野久郎兵衛 (dates unknown), like Kuranosuke was a councilor (*karō* 家老) of the Akō domain. He disagreed with Kuranosuke's faction over the disposition of the domain's financial reserves, and is said to have ended up stealing money and fleeing from Akō. Ōno was demonized as a coward and villain even before the attack on Kira in *Sekijō meiden* 赤城盟伝, a history of the league written by Kanzaki Yōgorō 神崎与五郎 and others (see Akōshi 1987, vol. 3, p. 263; and Smith 2002, p. 14). This depiction was perpetuated in Muro Kyūsō's *Akō gijin roku*; see pp. 170–80. Kurobei would be immortalized as a villain in *Kanadehon chūshingura* as Ono Kudayū 斧九太夫.

²⁶ 主税良金 (1688–1703). For Chikara as the son of a concubine, see note 40 below.

²⁷ Norinaga originally wrote ハラサント思ふ ("I plan to assuage. . ."), but crossed it out and replaced it with the more emphatic ハラサズンバアラズ ("I will not rest until . . . I assuage").

²⁸ Itō Goemon (430 koku) held the position of *kumigashira* and was the younger brother of Ōno Kurobyōe (Kurobei).

戸田采女正, a relative of Takumi no kami.²⁹ Their request was refused, however, and they were informed that the daimyo appointed to confiscate the castle had already left Edo. Returning to Ako, they reported the situation. Kuranosuke again summoned the retainers to meet at the castle. He took a seat on the upper level of the room and read the response aloud.

(FORGOT)

That day, too, he sent everybody home, telling them that the following day they should say farewell to their wives and children and ready themselves to die defending the castle. He told them to bring their armor and weapons to the castle, and to prepare to sustain a siege. Kuranosuke, too, went home, but at midnight, he returned to the castle and waited. All the others whose minds were set came soon after. Ōishi Kuranosuke then said to them:

“Until now I have told you that we should die fighting here in the castle, but it was so as to see your true feelings. In fact my intention is to take the head of Kōzuke no suke, whom our lord tried to kill, carry the head to the grave of our lord, and then commit seppuku. I think that this is the only way to appease the tormented spirit of our lord. We will give up the castle without protest and then seek an opportunity to strike Kōzuke no suke.” (An extended debate followed these words, but for reasons of brevity I have recorded only the main point.)

The generals in charge of the confiscation of the castle were Wakizaka Awaji no kami ワキザカアワジ守 and Kinoshita Higo no kami 木下ヒゴ守,³⁰ the government officials accompanying them were Araki Jūzaemon 荒木十左衛門 and Yanagihara Uneme 柳原采女,³¹ and the local magistrates Okada Shōdayu 岡田庄大夫 and Ishihara Shinzaemon 石原新左衛門.³² They all headed toward the Ako domain. The daimyo in the nearby provinces alerted their forces, anticipating that if the Ako retainers offered resistance they would be expected to aid the government force. The daimyo in nearby provinces with access to the sea readied their war boats. Ako was surrounded from all directions.³³ Houses related to Takumi no

²⁹ Toda Uneme no kami Ujisada 戸田采女正氏定 (1659–1719) was daimyo of the domain of Ōgaki 大垣, in present-day Gifu prefecture, and a younger cousin of Asano Naganori. The order of events described here is a bit confused: the petition was intended for the bakufu inspectors Araki Masaha 荒木政羽 and Sakakibara Masayoshi 榊原政殊 (see below, note 31), and when Tagawa and Tsukioka discovered that the group appointed to receive the castle had already left Edo, they were unsure what to do and ended up taking the petition to Toda, whom they knew to be the key intermediary in Edo for the Asano family of Akō. In a subsequent letter to Ōishi, Toda expressed his unhappiness that such a petition had been attempted.

³⁰ Both of these “generals” (*bushō* 武將) were middle-level daimyo: Wakizaka Awaji no kami Yasuteru 脇坂淡路守安照 (1658–1722) was daimyo of Tatsuno 竜野, in present-day Hyōgo prefecture, and Kinoshita Higo no kami Kinsada 木下肥後守公定 (1653–1730) was daimyo of Ashimori 足守, in present-day Okayama prefecture.

³¹ Araki Jūzaemon Masaha (1662–1732) and Sakakibara (not Yanagihara) Uneme Masayoshi (died 1722) were bakufu inspectors (*metsuke* 目付).

³² Okada Shōdayū Toshinobu 俊陳 (1652–1726) and Ishihara Shinzaemon Masauji 正氏 (d. 1710) were bakufu local magistrates (*daikan* 代官) appointed to administer the Akō domain lands after the departure of the Asano retainers.

³³ Norinaga crossed out here the sentence “In the castle, because of the mourning for their lord, they had shrouded the turrets.”

kami also sent messengers to observe the situation. They warned his retainers to surrender the castle quickly; otherwise they would be attacked from all directions and destroyed. There were forces camped everywhere. Inoue Dan'emon イノウエダン右衛門,³⁴ a messenger sent by the lord of the main house, Matsudaira Aki no kami, entered the castle. "Will you surrender the castle?" he asked Kuranosuke. "Look at all the troops surrounding you. If they attack you with a force like this, there will be no possibility to withstand them. Will you surrender the castle or not? That is what I am here to ask."

"Do not threaten us!" replied Kuranosuke. "Even though we may be surrounded by a huge army, it bothers me less than a fly would. Whether or not we shall surrender the castle has nothing to do with you." And he sent the messenger back.

But having a larger plan in mind, Kuranosuke had already decided to surrender the castle. So as to prevent the soiling of his late lord's reputation, he ordered the entire castle cleaned and repaired, from the paths and bridges to the interior of the buildings, and prepared spots for resting at various places. In this way he readied the castle to be surrendered to the government officials.

The officials sent a messenger to the castle to summon Kuranosuke. They read him the shogun's order that the castle was to be surrendered and the various laws obeyed, and indicated that he should respond. Although Kuranosuke was the kind of man who would not lose his composure even if heaven and earth were falling apart, he was so mortified and chagrined that he could not reply. He signed his name to the order with a quivering hand and returned to the castle. In the castle, all had been waiting for Kuranosuke's return and they asked him about the meeting. Kuranosuke told them about the orders, and they realized that that night was the last they would spend in the castle. The castle had been like their own home, and the thought (that now it was going to be someone else's possession) filled their hearts with sadness and made them all cry.³⁵

All of them had been maintaining a strict vigil, guarding against fire and the like, but now they left their positions and climbed the turrets of the castle and looked around at the troops that were surrounding them in all directions. They looked toward the sea and saw the hundreds of war boats lined up. Kuranosuke looked at the pennants and lanterns of the camps of the various forces arrayed around the castle, and recognized the commander of each. "Suppose we were now to fight to the death in this castle," he told his men. "Let's talk about how we would deploy our men against these forces, just for the sake of diversion." He let the others propose their ideas, and then advanced his own. But soon dawn would break, the government envoys would enter the castle, and all the weapons in the castle would be inspected and handed over.

The next morning, making sure that everything was in perfect condition, they waited for the government officials. The officials, Sakakibara Uneme no kami

³⁴ Inoue Dan'emon Masanobu 井上団右衛門正信.

³⁵ Norinaga crossed out the phrase in parentheses.

榊原采女正, Araki Jūzaemon, Ishihara Seizaemon, and Okada Shōdayu,³⁶ all entered through the main gate. Kuranosuke and the other retainers were waiting for them and guided them in. The bows, rifles, and all the other weapons were all checked and handed over. The government envoys inspected every room of the castle and put their seal on each. “Up to now,” Kuranosuke thought, “I was determined that, no matter how formidable our enemies might be, I would never allow them to step into the castle so long as there was breath in my body. I never imagined that I would have to guide them to examine every single room of the castle.” He struggled not to cry as he led the envoys through the castle. When they stopped to rest, Kuranosuke knelt before them with his forehead to the ground and said: “I humbly beg that Takumi no kami’s younger brother Daigaku may be allowed to continue the Asano house and that the retainers of the domain may continue to serve and not be dispersed as rōnin. Please, convey my petition to the shogun once you have returned to Edo.”

But the officials did not deign to reply. They simply stood and ordered him to continue to guide them. When he showed them the second enceinte, Kuranosuke again knelt down by the earthen bridge and, pressing his head to the ground, repeated his plea, but once more the officials paid no attention. Instead, they harshly ordered him to continue guiding them through the castle. Full of resentment, Kuranosuke proceeded with the tour of inspection. Some of the retainers were so frustrated that they were about to attack the magistrates. Barely able to restrain them, Kuranosuke completed the tour. Now they all had to leave the castle. How mortified they must have felt! The same day the castle was handed over to Lord Wakizaka Awaji no kami.

All the retainers returned to their homes and cried out loud.

The castle was surrendered in beautiful condition. There were no tears in the paper doors, and the tatami and everything else were in perfect shape.

When the government officials returned to the inn where they were lodging, they summoned Kuranosuke. “Earlier today,” they told him, “when you handed over the castle, you knelt down near the earthen bridge, pressing your head to the ground, and pleaded with us. We heard your words, but our position did not allow us to give you an answer. However, your appeal reached our heart. When we, Uneme and Jūzaemon, return to Edo, we will make sure to transmit it to those above us.”

Kuranosuke thanked them and left. All the others were waiting for Kuranosuke at his lodgings, and they asked him what had happened. He told them and sent them home. Then he ordered his son Yoshikane to bring him a brazier. Yoshikane

³⁶ The names of these four bakufu officials were all provided earlier in kanji (see p. 474), but with three differences: 1) the previous “Yanagihara” is changed here to “Sakakibara,” the correct name; 2) the previous “Shinzaemon” is given here in katakana, erroneously, as “Seizaemon”; and 3) the previous “Uneme” here becomes “Uneme no kami.” One can only speculate about the circumstances responsible for these differences. The correct characters for names like this could not in most cases be guessed from the sound, so Norinaga must have inquired, perhaps of Jitsudō, who may have given contradictory answers.

thought that his father's request was strange, since it was the fourth month and it would be strange to use a brazier in that season. He did as his father asked, however, and brought the brazier. Kuranosuke took out their pledge, tore it into pieces, and burned it.

"Father, you should commit seppuku!" burst out Yoshikane, who was watching from the side. "Now I understand your real intention. You have surrendered the castle with the excuse that you would instead attack Kōzuke no suke. And now, hoping to save your life, you are burning our pledge! Even if you are my father, on behalf of our lord, I cannot spare your life. You must commit seppuku at once! I will act as your second. What do you say?"

Kuranosuke deliberately did not reply. To test his son's seriousness, he made no excuse and said, "What will you do, then?" "I will kill you!" Yoshikane replied, and he struck at his father with his sword. Kuranosuke quickly restrained him and said: "The reason I burned our vow is because we would be compromised if somebody discovered it. Even without a written statement, a true samurai does not change his heart. That is why I burned it. What an impudent fool you are!" But even as he said this, in his heart, Kuranosuke praised his son.³⁷

ABBR. I will skip the matter of Okajima Yasoemon ヲカジマヤソ[岡嶋八十]右衛門 and Ōno Kurobei.³⁸

ABBR. I will skip the matter of Kuranosuke's visit to Kagakuji クワガク寺 temple.³⁹

Yoshikane was the son of a concubine; he had been separated from his real mother when he was seven years old.⁴⁰ Nonetheless, had his stepmother, Kuranosuke's primary wife, been his true mother, he could not have been more devoted to or cared more for her, and she, in the same way, could not have cared more for him had he been her true son. Kuranosuke and his primary wife had two other sons: the elder, Kichijiyo キチヂヨ,⁴¹ was thirteen years old, and the younger, Daizaburō 大三郎,⁴² was two years old.

³⁷ No earlier or later example of this revealing story has yet been found.

³⁸ The story here must have involved the debates over how to dispose of the domain finances, over which Okajima and Ōno differed. Norinaga transcribes Ōno's name in this instance in kana as "Kurobei." From here on, at various points, he indicates by the word *ryaku* 略 that he is skipping or abbreviating part of Jitsudō's narrative.

³⁹ Built in 1663 on the occasion of the thirty-third anniversary of the death of Asano Naganori's father, Nagashige 長重, Kagakuji 花岳寺 served as the Asano family temple in Akō.

⁴⁰ Yoshikane's age would be six by Western count. The ages mentioned below, too, should be reduced by one year to obtain that by Western count. The allegation that Yoshikane (Chikara) was the son of a concubine and not of Kuranosuke's wife Riku りく (or 理玖) is erroneous, and has not yet been found in any other account.

⁴¹ Or Kichichiyo 吉千代; born in 1691, he was the second son of Kuranosuke and his wife, Riku. He entered a Buddhist monastery at twelve and later took vows as a priest of the Ōbaku 黄檗 school of Zen at Kōkokuji 興国寺, in Yura 由良 (present-day Hyōgo prefecture), and died in 1709 in his nineteenth year.

⁴² This is the childhood name of Ōishi Sotoe Yoshiyasu 大石外衛良恭 (1702-1770); the third son of Kuranosuke and Riku, he was born in the seventh month of 1702, after his parents had parted and Riku had returned to her family home in Toyooka 豊岡 (present-day Hyōgō prefecture).

Kuranosuke's wife summoned Kichijiyo: "It may be," she said, "that you will have to die within the night."

"If I must die, then I will," Kichijiyo replied, "but first I would like to know the reason."

"Your father is going to Edo to take the head of Kōzuke no suke," his mother said. "As you are not yet fifteen years old, you are to be left behind. You already carry the two swords, however, and have the duty to uphold your honor as a samurai. Implore, then, your older brother Yoshikane to take you with the others, and tell him, if that is not possible, you will commit seppuku."

She had him put on a white kimono with pale blue *kamishimo* and sent him to Yoshikane's room. She followed behind, taking her halberd with her. Kichijiyo went to his brother and spoke as he had been told. (I FORGOT WHAT THE BROTHER SAID.)

(FORGOT)

Kuranosuke summoned his wife, Yoshikane, and Kichijiyo. "As I am sure you realize, I am going to Edo," he said his wife. "Since I have made a pledge not to say anything to even my wife or children, I can't reveal my intentions. The reason I am leaving my son Kichijiyo behind is so that, should my revenge not be successful and I die, you should bring him and his brother up, and have them carry on my revenge. If I succeed in killing my enemy, have them take the tonsure and pray for us. That's why I am leaving them at home."

He drank a cup of sake in parting and took his last leave of this world from them. He embarked on a ship, and as it left his hometown far behind, he turned back in tears to gaze at it. Eventually the ship reached Osaka.

The Ako retainers had decided among themselves that they would hide in different places around Osaka, Kyoto, Fushimi 伏見, and Ōtsu 大津. Kuranosuke alone would go to Edo, so as to check on what was happening there, and would let the others know the best moment to attack. All would then hurry there.

When Kuranosuke reached Osaka, he visited Hara Sōemon. Kuranosuke told Sōemon that he was going to Edo to observe the situation, and that when he sent a summons, Sōemon should lead all the other retainers to Edo. Kuranosuke then went to Kyoto and visited Zuikōin ずいくわう院. The temple was closely related to the family of his lord, and the abbot was a relative of Takumi no kami's wife. Kuranosuke met the abbot and gave him 250 ryō in gold to build a grave for his master. He also bought a plot of land for the graves of all the retainers.⁴³ After

⁴³ The connection between Zuikōin 瑞光院, a subtemple of Daitokuji 大徳寺, and the Asano family was established through Asano Naganori's wife Akuri 阿久里 (or 阿久利; 1674–1714), known after Naganori's death as Yōzeiin (or, as Norinaga has it below, Yōsen'in 瑤泉院), and the temple received an annual grant of one hundred koku from the Asano family. A memorial marker for Asano Naganori was erected there by Ōishi in the eighth month of 1701, and in 1719, on the seventeenth memorial of the death of the Akō rōnin, forty-six markers were placed near the monument to Asano. The temple and the stone memorials were moved to their present location in Yamashina in 1962.

discussing the details, he left the temple and spent the night at an inn in Sanjō 三条.

When Kuranosuke arrived in Edo, he went to the Asano family temple of Sengakuji せんがく寺, where his lord was buried, and paid homage at his grave. He then went to the house of Komeya Chūdayū 米屋ちう[忠]大夫 in Hamamatsu-chō ハママツ丁[浜松町],⁴⁴ where he had an introduction, and settled in there.⁴⁵

ABBR. I will not record the details of how Kuranosuke and [Horibe] Yasubyōe やす兵へ, without realizing each other's identity, got into a fight.⁴⁶

Horibe Yahyōe Kanamaru ホリベ[堀部]弥兵へ金丸 and his son-in-law Yasubyōe were Ako samurai who had been stationed in Edo. While waiting for Kuranosuke to arrive in Edo, anxious to avenge their lord, they used to stroll around Kira Kōzuke no suke's mansion disguised as street peddlers, or as beggars, or as daily workers. In this way they patrolled Kira's mansion to check the situation, but it was always guarded extremely closely.

Kuranosuke went to pay his respects to the people who had taken charge of the confiscation of the castle. Then he met Yōsen'in ヤウセン[瑤泉]院, his lord's wife, who was staying with Lord Asano Tosa no kami,⁴⁷ a relative of Takumi no kami. After talking with them, he returned to Komeya Chūdayū's house.

ABBR. I will skip recording the events concerning Fuwa no Kazuemon Masatane フワのカズエモンマサタネ[不破数右衛門正種].

Kuranosuke pondered Kōzuke no suke's precautions and the tight guard around his mansion; it would be better, he decided, to return to Kyoto for the moment. He thus sent his son Chikara Yoshikane on ahead.

ABBR. I will not record the details of how Ōno Kurobyōe and his son brought shame on themselves.

On the fourteenth day of the eighth month, the monthly anniversary of their lord's death, the former retainers who were in Edo, including Kuranosuke, Horibe Yahyōe Kanamaru, his son-in-law Yasubyōe, Nakamura Kansuke 中村カンスケ [勘介], Kanzaki Yōgorō Noriyasu カンザキヨ五郎ノリヤス[神崎与五郎則休], Kawamura Denbyōe 川村デン[伝]兵へ, and Yokogawa Kanpei 横川ヨコカワカンヘイ[勘

⁴⁴ The contributions of Komeya Chūdayū to the league both during Kuranosuke's first trip to Edo and again in the weeks leading up to the attack on Kira are well documented; see the summary in *Akō gishi jiten*, p. 386.

⁴⁵ While Jitsudō has Ōishi going directly to Edo after stopping only briefly in Kyoto to visit Zuikōin, in fact he settled first in Yamashina and went to Edo several months later, in the tenth month of 1701, staying for about one month.

⁴⁶ As Tanabe 1999 (no. 544), p. 3, notes, it is tantalizing not to know more of this account of a fight between the two great rivals in the league, Ōishi Kuranosuke and Horibe Yasubei 堀部安兵衛. No such episode is found anywhere else.

⁴⁷ This was Asano Nagasumi 浅野長澄 (1671–1714), daimyo of Miyoshi 三次 (a branch domain of Hiroshima) and a nephew of Takumi no kami's wife. Born as second son of the lord of the main Asano house in Hiroshima, he had been adopted by the lord of Miyoshi.

平], visited the grave of their lord. They rented a small room at Sengakuji and talked together. All wanted to take vengeance on their enemy as soon as possible, to take Kōzuke no suke's head without a day's further delay. Kuranosuke alone remained calm and explained the dangers of acting impetuously. Impressed by his arguments, the others decided that he should act as their leader, and thereafter returned home.

Kuranosuke, too, returned to Komeya Chūdayū's house.

ABBR. I will not record the details of how Matsudaira Aki no kami [the head of the Asano main house] sent a message to Kuranosuke by Watanabe Kumaemon ワタナベクマ右衛門.

Kuranosuke had some retainers remain in Edo and sent the others all back to Kyoto. After paying a visit to the Ise shrines, he, too, went back to Kyoto.

ABBR. I will not record the details of how Kuranosuke met on the street the physician Terai Genkei 寺井元ケイ.⁴⁸

Kuranosuke's son Chikara Yoshikane, who had returned to Kyoto before him, was staying with their friend Shindō Genshirō シンドウ源四郎,⁴⁹ in the village of Nishinoyama 西ヤマ, in Yamashina. Kuranosuke joined him there.

Thereupon, Kuranosuke purposely started behaving so as to become an object of public contempt, with the aim of getting Kōzuke no suke to loosen his guard. He indulged in various frivolous activities. He gathered good timber and built a splendid house in Nishinoyama village, purchased some fields, and lived in luxury.

ABBR. I will not record the details of how Kuranosuke schemed to spread the popularity of Inari いなり.⁵⁰

Kuranosuke began to spend an immense amount of money on a courtesan named Ukifune うき船, from a house in Shimoku-machi シモク町 in Fushimi.⁵¹ He also

⁴⁸ Terai Genkei 寺井玄溪 (1622–1711) was an Akō domain doctor residing in Kyoto whom Ōishi trusted deeply; he had wanted to join in the attack on Kira himself, but Ōishi urged him rather to live on and tell the story of the league. See Ōishi's letter to Terai of 1702.8.6, in Akō-shi 1987, vol. 3, p. 297.

⁴⁹ Shindō Genshirō Toshimoto 進藤源四郎俊式 (1651–1731) was an Asano retainer with a post of *ashigarugashira* 足輕頭 and a stipend of 400 koku; he was related to Ōishi Kuranosuke in several ways: his mother was the sister of Ōishi's grandfather, his first wife was Ōishi's aunt, and he adopted Ōishi's daughter Ruri ルリ (see genealogy in Akō-shi 1987, vol. 1, p. 366). The Shindō family held land in the Yamashina area east of Kyoto, and it was here, in the village of Nishinoyama, that Genshirō arranged for Ōishi to live after his departure from Akō. The story mentioned below of Ōishi building a fine house on the property is unattested.

⁵⁰ "Inari" may indicate the popular Fushimi Inari shrine, and hence serve as a metonymic reference to the Fushimi pleasure quarter itself.

⁵¹ This woman, presumably fictional, appears in other accounts as Ukihashi 浮橋. See the discussion in the introduction, p. 458. The place-name, 撞木町, is usually pronounced Shumoku-machi.

visited a woman called Okaru おかる.⁵² He dressed her in an elegant outfit and strolled around the city with her. He did many outlandish things. Therefore, not only people in the capital, but also those from the nearby provinces derided him. But there were also other people who suspected that he was secretly plotting something.

As a consequence of all this, the other retainers, too, came to regard him with suspicion, thinking that he had, in fact, become a degenerate fool. On the other hand, he always had Okaru ask those retainers about the size of their clothes, so as to be able to prepare the special garments to wear on the day of the vendetta.

Then it was the thirteenth day of the third month—the day before the first anniversary of the death of his lord, Takumi no kami—but Kuranosuke did not show any concern. He seemed to have forgotten it. He purposely continued to act like an idiot. He went to the pleasure quarter of Fushimi and drank a lot of sake. The following day his son Yoshikane and Okaru urged him to visit the grave of his lord at Zuikōin. He pretended he had forgotten what day it was, and then went to pray for his lord together with Okaru.

The other retainers all thought that even though Kuranosuke had talked at first about a plan to take revenge, he had in fact turned out to be a coward. Thus lamenting, they, too, went to pay their respects at the temple.

ABBR. I will not record the details of how the abbot of Zuikōin, a Zen temple with a sign at the front gate prohibiting the drinking of sake and such, scolded Kuranosuke for bringing a woman with him, and of what he replied. I will also skip recording how he explained to the other retainers that these things were all part of his plan.

ABBR. I will not record the details of how Kuranosuke, returning home from Fushimi, encountered a rough fellow known as Chōzō 長蔵 the Ox, a cowherd, and how he started a quarrel and deliberately got cut across the forehead.⁵³

When people heard that Kuranosuke had gotten a cut across his forehead from Chōzō the Ox, they all thought that he had cast aside the way of the samurai. They even started calling him a bastard son of a bitch.

ABBR. I will not record the details of how Kayano Sanpei committed seppuku because of the conflicting claims of loyalty and filial piety.⁵⁴

⁵² For the identity of Okaru and the way in which she is presented in this account, see the introduction, pp. 458–59.

⁵³ According to Tanabe 1999, (no. 547), p. 3, the story of Chōzō the Ox (Kote no Chōzō くての長蔵) appears in a later *kōdan* 講談 version, where he is described as a horse groom (*umakata* 馬方) rather than a cowherd. A similar story later grew up around the legendary character of the Satsuma swordsman Murakami Kiken 村上喜剣, who is said to have kicked Kuranosuke in the street and cursed him for his dissipation, and who, upon learning of the success of revenge, committed suicide at Ōishi's grave; see Fukumoto 1914, pp. 893–94, for the origins of the legend, which became widespread in the nineteenth century and appeared as the story of the “Satsuma man” in A. B. Mitford's account of the Akō revenge (Mitford 1871, pp. 35–36).

⁵⁴ Kayano, mentioned earlier as one of the first two messengers to carry the news of Asano's

In the meantime, Kōzuke no suke was beginning to loosen his guard.

Kuranosuke ordered the dress to be used on the day of the vendetta from a man named Kikuya Yahyōe 菊屋弥兵へ.⁵⁵ He chose black haori of high-quality woolen cloth, with stomach bands and coats of mail underneath. The gauntlets and leggings were also mailed. The helmets had an extra layer of metal inside the crown. He also arranged that each person should carry fifteen ryō at the time of the vendetta. (This was to indicate that they were not poor.) This was all part of Kuranosuke's plan: in this way, should they fail in their revenge and be killed in Kōzuke no suke's mansion, people would not think that, having lost their stipends, they had broken into his house as burglars.

Kuranosuke was particularly worried about how to arrange for the necessary weapons. Hitting upon a plan, he paid a visit to the Osaka town elder (*sōjukurō* 惣宿老) Amanoya Rihyōe アマノヤ[天野屋]利兵へ.⁵⁶

ABBR. I will not record the details of how Kuranosuke got Rihyōe to pledge his life and to place an order for the armor and weapons under the pretext that they were for use at Osaka castle. Having agreed, once the weapons were ready, Rihyōe marked them as the property of Osaka castle and sent them to Edo. As a result, Rihyōe and his son were arrested and subjected to brutal torture, but they never confessed, and before they had been brought to the point of death, Kuranosuke succeeded in carrying out his mission.

Thereafter Rihyōe and his son were regarded as in fact upright people. Rihyōe's son, changing his name from Sōjirō 惣二郎, adopted the name Amano Rihyōe. He is now said to be at the service of Lord Matsudaira Aki no kami, supplying military provisions, and receiving a stipend of five hundred koku.

Takumi no kami's younger brother Lord Daigaku had continued to be under house arrest. Eventually, the decision was made to put him under the custody [of the main Asano house] in Aki province. Kuranosuke and the others began to gather one by one in Edo to pursue their enemy.

ABBR. I will not record the details of how Takebayashi Tadashichi's 武林ただ[唯]七 father Heizaemon 平左右衛門 and his mother killed themselves in order to encourage their son to act loyally.⁵⁷

attack on Kira to Akō, was a member of the league of revenge whose parents arranged against his wishes for him to enter the service of another daimyo. Caught in a bind of loyalty and filiality, he took his life on 1702.1.14, the memorial day of Asano's death. He would become a model for Hayano Kanpei 早野勘平 in *Kanadehon chūshingura*.

⁵⁵ No other references to this person could be found.

⁵⁶ Regarding Amanoya, see the introduction, pp. 455–56.

⁵⁷ This and various other similar stories of parents of the rōnin committing suicide in order to encourage their sons are all apocryphal, as are those describing the suicide of various parents (almost all mothers) after the seppuku of the rōnin. In the case of Takebayashi, he clearly reported both of his parents as alive on the list of relatives (*shinruigaki* 親類書) that he provided the authorities after being taken into custody.

ABBR. I will not record the details of how more than forty men, beginning with Kuranosuke, met at Jūami ジウアミ⁵⁸ at Maruyama 丸[円]山, in Higashiyama ward.⁵⁹

ABBR. I will not record the details of how Hara Sōemon parted from his son.⁶⁰

ABBR. I will not record the details about how Kuranosuke said farewell to his concubine Okaru and left for Edo, and how Okaru cut her hair, gave it to Kuranosuke, and killed herself.

All the retainers were gathering in Edo one by one. Three or four were still to arrive, but they, too, reached Edo in four days and a half.

ABBR. I will not record the details of how a certain Yatō Chōsuke ヤトウ長助, unable to take part in the revenge because of illness and thinking it dishonorable as a samurai to die of a disease, committed seppuku. He had his son Yatō Emoshichi ヤトウエモ七 take his head to Kuranosuke.⁶¹

It was decided that Kuranosuke should be the commander of the main force, which was to attack the front gate of the mansion, and his son Chikara Yoshikane the commander of the other force, which was to attack the rear gate. The retainers were divided into groups numbered according to the syllabary, with three persons forming the *i* い group, another three the *ro* ろ group, and so forth.⁶²

After reaching Edo, Kuranosuke changed his name to Kakimi Heizaemon カキミ平左衛門. His son Chikara became Kakimi Sanai カキミサナイ.⁶³

They decided to make the attack on the night of the nineteenth day of the twelfth month, the night of *setsubun* セツブン[節分].⁶⁴ But then, they learned that on the

⁵⁸ Jūami 重阿弥 was one of several branches of the Jishū 時宗 school temple of An'yōji 安養寺, which was a large complex in the area east of Yasaka 八坂 shrine, in the hills of Higashiyama. Such places were widely used for parties and meetings.

⁵⁹ The "Maruyama conference" (Maruyama *kaigi* 円山会議), held on 1702.7.28, was attended by nineteen people; it marked a key turning point in the history of the league of revenge, for it was here that Ōishi Kuranosuke finally committed himself wholly to revenge on Kira.

⁶⁰ Hara's son mentioned here must be his heir Jūjirō 重次郎, who was age five at the time of his father's death and took the tonsure to avoid banishment when he reached maturity. After the pardon of the heirs of the rōnin in 1709, Jūjirō left the priesthood and became a retainer of the main Asano house in Hiroshima; see Akō-shi 1987, vol. 1, p. 305.

⁶¹ Yatō Chōsuke Noriteru 矢頭長介 教照 had served Takumi no kami with a stipend of 20 koku. He died not of suicide, but of illness; his date of death is often given as 1702.8.15 (*Akō gishi jiten*, p. 313), but appears as 1702.10.14 in a letter written by his son Emoshichi 右衛門七; see Akō-shi 1987, vol 3, pp. 337-38.

⁶² By the time of this account in 1744, the convention of assigning one kana of the syllabary to each of the forty-seven rōnin was well established; no other example is known, however, of the system described here, where each kana was for a group of three.

⁶³ Kuranosuke had often used the alias Ikeda Kueemon 池田九右衛門 on letters written from Yamashina, but in Edo he took the name Kakimi Gorobei 垣見五郎兵衛, posing as an older relative of his son Chikara, who took the name Kakimi Sanai 垣見左内. For a list of the aliases used by of the Akō rōnin, see Akō-shi 1987, vol. 1, p. 154.

⁶⁴ The night before the calendrical beginning of spring.

fourteenth, Lord Kira Kōzuke no suke, who was a devotee of the tea ceremony, was planning a tea ceremony to which he had invited Lord Ōtomo Ōmi no kami 大友近江守. [Ōtaka] Gengo [大高] 源五, who had become a pupil of the tea master Yamada Sōhen ヤマダサウヘン, had heard this.⁶⁵ He also managed to inquire casually about the details of Lord Kōzuke no suke's mansion, and reported this information to Kuranosuke. They thus decided to make the attack on the fourteenth rather than the nineteenth. Fortuitously, the fourteenth was also the day of Lord Takumi no kami's death. The loyal samurai waited impatiently for the fourteenth to come.⁶⁶

The retainers all sent messengers to their hometown to convey their farewells in this life to their families.

ABBR. I will not record the details of how, from the time of Kuranosuke's arrival in Edo until the day of the vendetta, retainers had taken turns every night spying on Kōzuke no suke's mansion in various disguises. From midnight of the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, it was Kanzaki Yōgorō Noriyasu's turn. He was disguised as a peddler of *dengaku* snacks.⁶⁷ With the approach of dawn, he was about to leave, but when he went to the rear gate of Lord Kōzuke no suke's mansion, he saw Kuranosuke, dressed like a beggar and wrapped in a rush mat. (It had been snowing since the day before.) Emerging from the snow, Kuranosuke accompanied Yōgorō home. His son Yoshikane had been watching at the front gate in the same fashion.

Prior to this, on the day of the thirteenth, the retainers had all gone to Kuranosuke's place. (He was staying at Koku-chō コク丁[石町]) Father and son were wrapped in quilts and sitting close to the brazier. The others had criticized them, saying that this was not the way that one planning to die the next day should behave. But now, Kanzaki Yōgorō discovered them in the snow and, shocked, was moved to tears. Kuranosuke told him that he and his son had spent all the previous nights in the same way, watching Kira's mansion. They were truly great men, rare to encounter nowadays.

On the very eve of the attack, Okuno Shōgen and Shindō Genshirō had a change of heart and did not join the others.⁶⁸ At the beginning, when there was talk of making a stand at the castle, both had gathered at the castle with their armor, but later they had a change of heart. The number of the men was thus forty-seven,

⁶⁵ The story of Ōtaka Gengo and Yamada Sōhen 山田宗偏 is well documented in the primary materials; see the account in *Akō-shi* 1987, vol. 1, pp. 183–86.

⁶⁶ According to the historical consensus about the sequence of events, the date for the attack was originally set not for the nineteenth, but for the sixth day of the twelve month, when a tea gathering was scheduled to be held at Kira's residence. The gathering was canceled, however, and the rōnin therefore had to reschedule the attack for the fourteenth.

⁶⁷ Norinaga has *rengaku* レンガク, a variant pronunciation of *dengaku* 田楽, pieces of taro potato or tofu toasted with a sweet miso topping.

⁶⁸ It appears that Okuno Shōgen and Shindō Genshirō (see above, pp. 472 and 480) had in fact both left the league by the eighth month of 1702, and therefore never reached Edo.

but because Kayano Sanpei Shigetsugu had earlier followed his lord in death, it appears that forty-six men took part in the attack on Kōzuke no suke's mansion.⁶⁹

The morning of the fourteenth, all the retainers went to Sengakuji to pay homage at the tomb of their lord.⁷⁰ They had all gathered to offer their respects, but Yokogawa Kanpei had not yet arrived. Kanpei, in fact, on his way to Sengakuji had stopped to call on a priest with whom he was friendly named Gachō 臥朝, who lived in Hayashi-chō ハヤシ[林]町, in Honjo 本所. Kanpei had a small debt to him, and stopped to see him in regard to that, but just then a servant arrived with a message from Lord Kōzuke no suke for Gachō. As Gachō was a practitioner of the tea ceremony, Lord Kōzuke no suke wanted to invite him to attend the tea gathering arranged for that evening in honor of Lord Ōtomo Ōmi no kami. Since Yokogawa Kanpei happened to be there when the messenger arrived, he wrote a reply in Gachō's place and (so as to be able to check on the situation there) went to Lord Kōzuke no suke's mansion as Gachō's messenger.⁷¹ He thus was able to inspect the mansion from top to bottom. When he joined the others at Sengakuji and told them what happened, Kuranosuke and the others were delighted. What Kanpei observed was just as Gengo had heard previously. They thus had a good overall picture of the layout of Kōzuke no suke's residence.

Kuranosuke then explained the procedures to be followed, from the assault on the mansion to Kōzuke no suke's beheading, and what to do thereafter. He wrote out all the points on a piece of paper and had the retainers seal it in blood. (I will abbreviate here the details.) The general points were as follows.

First, they were to wear haori of black wool lined in dark red with two white stripes on the front as an insignia. Their helmets were to be reinforced with a second, inner crown. Each was to carry fifteen ryō together with a signed piece of paper stating that the money should be given to those who disposed of the corpse. A letter of the syllabary, indicating the group to which each belonged, was written on the silver ornament on their helmets. The three-man groups were to assist each other, but not to pay attention to the rest. So as to look as if they were inspectors charged with looking out for fire, they should carry ladders, big hammers, and buckets, but they should sneak into the mansion quietly, without

⁶⁹ Kayano's proper name was Shigezane 重実, not Shigetsugu. Note that the totals here do not include Terasaka Kichiemon 寺坂吉右衛門, who historically took part in the attack but left shortly after and was not among the forty-six taken into custody; for more on Terasaka, see Smith forthcoming.

⁷⁰ No primary evidence exists for a visit of the rōnin to Sengakuji the morning before the attack on Kira, and such an act would have surely been risky, but since the fourteenth was the memorial day of Asano's death, the story had a natural appeal and appeared in various of the early chronicles, such as *Akō gijin roku* (p. 294) and *Sekijō gishinden* (p. 294).

⁷¹ This story, for which there is no corroboration in the primary sources, appears as a note added to the later (ca. 1709) version of *Ako gijin roku* (p. 294). In that account, the person Yokogawa Kanpei visits is an anonymous, illiterate rōnin and the date is unspecified. *Sekijō gishinden* repeats the story, but gives the date as the tenth and makes the rōnin an anonymous recluse (桑門 *sōmon*; pp. 288–89). The episode does not appear in *Akō seigi*, which features a completely different story about Yokogawa, and may have later disappeared from the oral tradition.

letting anyone know they were there. Once they succeeded in taking Lord Kōzuke's head, they should blow on the whistle that each was to carry. As soon as they heard the whistle all should assemble.

They should not concern themselves with anyone but Kira. They should avoid meaningless killing, and not bother women and children, but should finish off anyone who attacked them. In striking down Kōzuke no suke, even if it was not done cleanly and they had to tear it off, they should take his head at all costs. They should not damage the walls or act rowdily and should not touch any weapons or armaments. They should, however, check into anything suspicious. There also was a possibility that shogunal officers would come to investigate the situation while the fighting was still going on. Should that happen, one person should go out to meet the officers, and, even if Kōzuke no suke had not yet been captured, tell them that the retainers had already killed him, but that as they were still scattered in different parts of the mansion, they would let the officers in as soon as they had assembled in one place. The merit of those who stood on guard outside the mansion was to be the same as those who grappled with Lord Kōzuke.

After everything was set, they returned to their lodgings. When night fell, the group that was to attack the front of the mansion under Kuranosuke assembled and dressed themselves at Horibe Yahyōe's place. The group that was to attack the rear gate, led by Chikara, assembled and dressed themselves at Maibara [Maebara] Isuke's マイバラエスケ[前原伊助] place. Horibe Yahyōe's nephew was sent ahead to keep watch at the mansion and to see when Lord Ōtomo Ōmi no kami left it. As soon as Lord Ōtomo left, he hurried back to inform the others. All started marching toward the mansion. Kuranosuke's group of twenty-four men climbed over the wall from the front of the mansion. Chikara's group of twenty-three men entered from the rear and surrounded the mansion. Kuranosuke's group flung open the door of the entrance hall and stealthily headed for the bedrooms. First, however, they cut the strings of the bows that were lined up near the entrance and hid the spears and rifles. Kuranosuke stuck a piece of paper into a tatami at the entrance; on it he wrote that they were foregoing the normal niceties and breaking into the mansion because of the irresistible demands of the way of lord and vassal. They moved steadily toward the inner rooms, paying no heed to the sleeping men they encountered, but a boy sleeping there started awake. Threatening that he was a dead man if he raised his voice, they tied him up and pushed him to the side, but he managed to twist free and escape. Wakened by the alarm he raised, other samurai came out to fight the retainers.

ABBR. I will not record the details of how the fight intensified.

Looking towards the wall of the neighboring mansion, they saw a large number of lanterns raised high. "This is Tsuchiya Chikara 土屋チカラ,"⁷² a voice declared.

⁷² Tsuchiya Chikara 土屋主税 (1660–1730) was a hatamoto whose residence was located on the north side of Kira's mansion.

“If robbers have broken into your house we will help you fight them.” Horibe Yahyōe came out. “We are Takumi no kami’s retainers,” he replied. “We are here to avenge our lord.” The lanterns were all withdrawn; instead the people on the other side threw a large number of oranges over the wall so that the retainers could relieve their thirst.

The retainers ran here and there, but they could not find any room that seemed to be Kira’s bedroom. Then they saw two or three warriors guarding a room. Convinced that this was Kōzuke no suke’s bedroom, they all rushed inside. They did not meet any strong resistance and easily entered. “Now that things have come to this point,” they cried, “come out without protesting and let us take your head!” But there was no answer.

They broke the paper doors and entered the room, but nobody was there. The quilts, when they felt them, were still warm, a sure sign that Kōzuke no suke could not have gotten very far. They searched everywhere for him, but could not find him. As they had not yet searched inside the coffer and chests of drawers, they began to check these, too. But of Lord Kōzuke there was no trace. Next they lifted up the tatami and thrust their swords into the cracks between the boards underneath. People hiding under the veranda tried to run away, but the retainers caught them and tied them up. Soon they ran out of rope, so they opened the front gate and, after checking them one by one, released the people they had caught. Still they could not find Lord Kōzuke.

While the others went outside to look, Kuranosuke remained in the great hall. Seeing him all alone, three notable warriors, experts with the spear and sword, clambered up the pillars and attacked him from above. (They were Kobayashi Heihachi 小林平八,⁷³ a famous spearman, and the noted swordsmen Shudō Yoichiemon 首藤与一右衛門 and Suzuki Motoemon 鈴木元右衛門.) Being one against three, Kuranosuke was put in a tight spot, but he managed to fight back and killed them all.

The eastern sky was beginning to lighten, but of Kōzuke no suke there was still no trace. The retainers gathered at the great hall. “Dawn is about to break and the shogun’s guards could arrive any minute,” they said to each other. “It would be better to commit seppuku here, rather than risk the dishonor of being caught and bound and having our heads lopped off. What an unfortunate fate!” But Kuranosuke stopped them: “Hold on!” he said. “Don’t give up! There may be a secret cellar in the ground. See if you can’t find something that looks like a cellar.” The retainers began to poke the ground. “Last year,” Kanzaki Yogorō said, “they collected a lot of one-inch thick zelkova boards. Working as a day laborer, I helped carry those boards here, and I thought at the time that something was strange. For sure they must have used them to cover a secret cellar in the ground.”

⁷³ Kobayashi was a retainer of the Uesugi 上杉 house, which was closely related to Kira. His skills as a spearman are reported also in *Kōseki kenmonki* 江赤見聞記, and he would become a fixture of later *kōdan*.

They noticed a teahouse where the earthen floor was mounded up. The secret cellar must be under the teahouse, they thought. Pulling up the tatami and flooring, they caught sight of a light, but the moment they removed the boards it went out.

“He’s here!” Kuranosuke thought. “Sire,” he declared politely, “we are here to take your head.”

Again there was no answer. With lanterns in hand they went down into the cellar. They found a secret passage and followed it. Meanwhile, Horibe Yahyōe Kanamaru was crouching near an artificial mound in the garden topped by a small Inari shrine, in order to block that possible escape route. Suddenly a man emerged from the ground at the foot of the Inari shrine. His hair was pulled back in the style of one in retirement, and he wore a yellow kimono with wide sleeves and a womanly sash. (It was Lord Kōzuke.)⁷⁴

“It’s him!” Yahyōe thought and grabbed him. He started to whistle to the others, but another man appeared and seized him from behind, helping Lord Kōzuke to escape. Yahyōe was almost done in, but Takebayashi Tadashichi came to his aid, killed the man who was holding him, and helped him capture Lord Kōzuke. They dragged Lord Kōzuke to the great hall.

Kuranosuke asked who had captured him. Yahyōe was the first to catch him and then Takebayashi Tadashichi, was the reply. Kuranosuke faced Lord Kōzuke and bowed with his hands on the floor. “With all due respect I must tell you that, unable otherwise to uphold the way of lord and vassal, we have come to take your head. I ask you to commit seppuku without further ado.” Lord Kōzuke, however, did not reply. He tried to escape, but found himself surrounded on all sides. The retainers were ready to strike him down at any moment. With nothing else to do, he began to make excuses. “It was Lord Takumi no kami who tried to kill me (without paying any heed to the place where we were). I ignored him and ran away. You can see here where he struck me. (For his act he was ordered to commit seppuku.) There are no grounds for you to kill me, saying that it is to avenge your lord!”

At that Kuranosuke gave a signal, and Takebayashi Tadashichi struck off Kira’s head. Then all the others, beginning with Kuranosuke, struck the corpse in turn, saying “Take this as vengeance for our lord!” The corpse was reduced to shreds. Yoshida Chūzaemon 吉田テウ[忠]左衛門 and Tomimori Suke-dayū トミモリスケダユウ⁷⁵ took the head and, keeping out of sight, boarded a small boat at Ryōgoku 両国 for Sengakuji. The others took a false head (this was so it would

⁷⁴ For the unique nature of this intriguing account of the way in which Kira was found, see the introduction, p. 459.

⁷⁵ The same person is named below as Tomimori Sukeemon 富森助右衛門. As noted in the introduction (p. 457), the identification of these two retainers as those charged with carrying the true head to Sengakuji is at odds with the reference to them in the following paragraph as being assigned to report to the bakufu authorities the successful completion of the vendetta; it is also at odds with other manuscript chronicles and *jitsuroku* accounts. Presumably it results from confusion on the part of either Jitsudō or Norinaga.

not matter even if it were confiscated).⁷⁶ Having made sure that there was no danger of fire breaking out in the mansion, they left by the rear gate. Eighteen of the enemy were killed and more than ten wounded.⁷⁷ On the retainers' side, two were wounded, but only lightly.

As they left from the rear gate, Tsuchiya Chikara again came out. "Allow me to congratulate you on achieving your aim," he said. "What a splendid accomplishment!" Yoshida Chūzaemon and Tomimori Sukeemon were sent to Lord Sengoku Hōki no kami セングクハウキ守 to say that the retainers had no intention to escape and were heading to Sengakuji, where they would wait for the government's judgment.⁷⁸ On their way to Sengakuji, they knocked at the gate of Ekōin エカウ[回向]院 temple, but were not allowed to enter. They thus stopped at the inn of Sakaya Jūhyōe 酒屋十兵へ to have a drink before continuing on to Sengakuji. When they passed in front of the gate of the mansion of Lord Wakizaka Awaji no kami, they were stopped and asked who they were. They did not hide who they were, and told what had happened, and the gatekeeper allowed them to pass on.⁷⁹ They were questioned again when they arrived at the mansion of Lord Matsudaira Mutsu no kami 松平ムツ[陸奥]守.⁸⁰ They explained the situation, but the gatekeepers would not let them pass and told them to wait. When they appealed to Lord Mutsu no kami, he invited all of them to enter the mansion. "Although I cannot approve of such actions, you have shown yourselves to be true samurai," he said, and he offered them a cup of sake. They passed the cup of sake among their ranks and returned it to Kuranosuke. Saying that he would take it as a memento to put on Lord Takumi no kami's grave, Kuranosuke was about to put it in his bosom.

"Leave it with me," Lord Mutsu no kami said. "That would be too much of an honor," Kuranosuke replied. "Then give it instead to my son, Tsunamura ツナムラ,"⁸¹ the lord said. Kuranosuke thus offered the cup to the young lord, and the retainers proceeded to Sengakuji, escorted by a large force of Lord Mutsu no kami's men.

It is said that the gatekeepers of Lord Mutsu no kami's mansion, who stopped the retainers, were rewarded by being elevated to the status of samurai with a stipend of five hundred koku. The gatekeepers of Lord Awaji no kami's mansion,

⁷⁶ For variant stories about the disposition of Kira's head(s), and the different routes taken, see the introduction, pp. 456–57.

⁷⁷ The bakufu inspectors who investigated the Kira mansion reported sixteen dead (other than Kira himself); see Noguchi 1994, pp. 172–74.

⁷⁸ Sengoku Hisanao 仙石久尚 (1655–1735) was a hatamoto (1,500 koku) and one of the two chief inspectors (*ōmetsuke* 大目付) of the bakufu at the time.

⁷⁹ Wakizaka was one of the daimyo charged with overseeing the surrender of Akō castle. See above, p. 474.

⁸⁰ Date Tsunamura 伊達綱村 (1659–1719), daimyo of Sendai 仙台 domain.

⁸¹ There is some confusion here, as Tsunamura was the daimyo (although he retired in 1703 at the age of forty-five), not his son, "the young lord" (*wakadono* 若殿).

on the other hand, were stripped of the status of samurai (*ahōbarai* 阿房払い) for not having stopped the retainers.⁸²

After gathering at Sengakuji, they all proceeded to the grave of their lord. The priests of the temple locked the front gate, in case a force should come in pursuit of the retainers. The men sent as an escort by Lord Mutsu no kami stood guard in front of the gate so as to prevent the retainers from escaping.

Kuranosuke placed the head of Lord Kōzuke no suke in front of his lord's grave. He then offered up the dagger he had received from Lord Takumi no kami. "Today we have brought Kōzuke no suke here," he declared. "My Lord, strike him as you please!"

The retainers all burnt incense and wept with joy.

The vendetta took place on the fourteenth day of the twelfth month of the fifteenth year of Genroku.

The head of Lord Kōzuke no suke was handed over to the priests of Sengakuji. When the family temple of Kōzuke no suke came to ask for it, the abbot said that he could not hand it over on his own authority. He thus consulted Lord Abe Hida no kami 阿部飛弾[驪]守,⁸³ who ordered that the head should be returned to Kira's family temple. On the nineteenth day of the twelfth month, at eleven o'clock, the head was transferred to Kira's family temple and buried together with his body.

The abbot of Sengakuji, after telling Kuranosuke, informed Lord Abe Hida no kami about the retainers of Lord Takumi no kami. Lord Abe Hida no kami summoned the forty-seven men. They came dressed in the same clothes as they had worn on the day of the attack. At the entrance, they handed over their swords. The inspectors Mizuno Kozaemon 水野小左衛門 and Suzuki Gen'emon 鈴木源右衛門⁸⁴ queried the retainers, and Kuranosuke explained the situation. The inspectors then told the retainers that orders would be handed down later about further interrogation of each of them. For the time being, in accordance with the law of the realm, they were to be allowed to keep their swords and were to be taken into custody. They were thereby entrusted to the custody of different daimyo.

The circumstances of custody:

Lord Hosokawa Etchū no kami 細川越中守⁸⁵ had custody of the following seventeen samurai:

⁸² *Ahōbarai* was a form of banishment in which a samurai was stripped of his swords.

⁸³ Abe Hida no kami Masataka 阿部飛驒守正喬 (1669–1714) was at the time prefect of temples and shrines (*jisha bugyō* 寺社奉行).

⁸⁴ Mizuno Kozaemon (1664–1778) and Suzuki Gengoemon 源五右衛門 (not Gen'emon; 1660–1743) were the bakufu inspectors sent to meet the Akō rōnin at Sengakuji after the attack on Kira.

⁸⁵ Hosokawa Tsunatoshi 細川綱利 (1643–1714) was daimyo of Kumamoto 熊本 (present-day Kumamoto prefecture), 540,000 koku.

1. Ōishi Kuranosuke 大石内蔵之介[助],⁸⁶ chief councilor (*karō* 家老): 1,500 koku; age 45.
2. Hara Sōemon Mototoki 原惣右衛門モト、キ[元辰], foot soldier commander (*ashigarugashira* 足輕頭): 300 koku; age 55.
3. Kataoka Gengoemon 片岡源五右衛門, chief steward (*sobayōnin* 側用人): 350 koku; age 36.
4. Mase Kyūdayū 間瀬久大[太]夫, chief inspector (*ōmetsuke* 大目付): 300 koku; age 63.
5. Onodera Jūnai 小野寺重[十]内, Kyoto representative (*Kyō rusui* 京留主[守]居): 150 koku; age 60.
6. Yoshida Chūzaemon 吉田忠左衛門, county magistrate (*gundai* 郡代): 200 koku; age 63.
7. Isogai Jūrōzaemon 磯貝十郎左衛門, steward (*yōnin* 用人): 150 koku; age 24.
8. Horibe Yahei Kanamaru 堀部弥兵衛金丸, Edo representative, retired (*Edo rusu[i]* *inkyō* 江戸留主[守居]隱居): 150 koku; age 76.
9. Tomimori Sukeemon 富森助右衛門, horseman (*umamawari* 馬廻り): 200 koku; age 33.
10. Chikamatsu Kanroku 近松勘六, horseman: 250 koku; age 33.
11. Ushioda Matanojō 潮田又之丞, horseman: 200 koku; age 33.
12. Akagaki Genzō 赤垣源蔵,⁸⁷ idem: 200 koku; age 31.
13. Okuda Magodayū 奥田孫大[太]夫, idem: 150 koku; age 56.
14. Yada Gorōemon 矢田五郎右衛門, idem: 200 koku; age 29.
15. Ōishi Sezaemon 大石瀬左衛門, idem: 150 koku; age 27.
16. Hayami Tōzaemon 早水藤左衛門, idem: 150 koku; age 29.
17. Hazama Jūbyōe 間重兵衛,⁸⁸ idem: 150 koku; age 56.

Lord Matsudaira Oki no kami 松平隠岐守⁸⁹ had the custody of the following ten samurai:

1. Ōishi Chikara Yoshikane 大石主税ヨシカネ[良金], heir (*heyazumi* 部屋住); age 16.
2. Horibe Yasubyōe 堀部安兵衛: 200 koku; age 33.
3. Nakamura Kansuke 中村勘介[助], registrar (*shoyaku* 書役): 100 koku; age 47.
4. Kimura Okaemon 木村岡右衛門, horseman: 150 koku; age 45.
5. Sugaya Hanojō 菅谷半之丞, spearman (*yari* 鎗): 100 koku; age 44.
6. Fuwa Kazuemon 生波[不破]数右衛門, construction magistrate (*fushin bugyō* 普請奉行): 100 koku; age 33.
7. Ōtaka Gengo 大高源五,⁹⁰ attendant (*kinju* 近習): 50 koku; age 31.

⁸⁶ Norinaga inserted the additional names “Fujiwara no Yoshio 藤原ヨシヲ,” a reference to Kuranosuke’s (supposed) lineage name Fujiwara and his given name Yoshio 良雄.

⁸⁷ Norinaga mistook Akabane 赤埴 for “Akagaki,” an error that was widespread and later became fixed in *kōdan* storytelling.

⁸⁸ Hazama’s name was Kihyōe 喜兵衛; the characters 喜 and 重 have been confused.

⁸⁹ Matsudaira (Hisamatsu 久松 branch) Sadanao 定直 (1660–1720) was daimyo of Matsuyama 松山 (present-day Ehime prefecture), 150,000 koku.

⁹⁰ Norinaga inserted the reading “Takao” タカヲ next to Gengo, probably an (erroneous) reference to Ōtaka’s given name, Tadao 忠雄.

8. Kaiga Yazaemon 貝賀弥左衛門: 10 ryō, 3 *nin-fuchi*; age 56.
9. Chidori Saburobei 千鳥[馬]三郎兵衛:⁹¹ horseman: 100 koku; age 53.
10. Okano Kin'emon 岡野金右衛門: 200 koku; age 23.

Lord Mōri Kai no kami 毛利甲斐守⁹² had the custody of the following ten samurai:

1. Onodera Kōemon 小野寺幸右衛門 (younger brother of [Ōtaka] Gengo): 5 *nin-fuchi*; age 27.
2. Kurahashi Densuke 倉橋伝助, attendant: 1 *nin-fuchi*, 20 koku; age 33.
3. Okajima Yasoemon 岡嶋弥惣[八十]右衛門: 20 koku, 5 *nin-fuchi*; age 37.
4. Yoshida Sawaemon 吉田沢右衛門, heir of Chūzaemon:⁹³ age 28.
5. Muramatsu Kihyōe 村松喜兵衛, magistrate of stipends (*fuchikata bugyō* 扶持方奉行): 25 koku, 5 *nin-fuchi*; age 61.
6. Kataoka Shinroku 片岡新六:⁹⁴ age 28.
7. Takebayashi Tadashichi 武林唯七, attendant: 10 ryō, 3 *nin-fuchi*; age 31.
8. Sugino Jūheiji 杉野十平次, attendant: 8 ryō, 3 *nin-fuchi*; age 27.
9. Maebara Isuke 前原伊介[助], magistrate of money (*kane bugyō*): 10 ryō, 3 *nin-fuchi*; age 39.
10. Katsuda Shin'emon 勝田新右衛門, keeper of the seals (*fuda yokome* 札横目): 10 ryō, 3 *nin-fuchi*; age 23.

Lord Mizuno Kenmotsu 水野監物⁹⁵ had custody of the following eight samurai:⁹⁶

1. Mase Magokurō 間瀬孫九郎, son of Kyūdayū: age 23.
2. Yatō Emoshichi 矢頭右衛門七, son of Chōsuke 長助: age 17.
3. Okuda Sadaemon 奥田定[貞]右衛門, son of Magodayū: age 25.
4. Kayano Wasuke 菅の[茅野]和介[助]: 7 ryō, 3 *nin-fuchi*, age 37.
5. Muramatsu Sandayū 村松三大[太]夫, son of Kihyōe: age 27.
6. Hazama Jūjirō 間十次郎, son of Jūbyōe: age 26.
7. Tomibayashi Sukenoshin 富林助之進:⁹⁷ 7 ryō, 4 *nin-fuchi*; age 37.
8. Kanzaki Yogorō Noriyasu 神崎与五郎[則休]: 7 ryō, 4 *nin-fuchi*; age 38.

⁹¹ Norinaga mistook Chiba 千馬 (read Senba by some) for Chidori, a confusion of the characters 馬 and 鳥.

⁹² Mōri Tsunamoto 毛利綱元 (1650–1709) was daimyo of Chōfu 長府 (present-day Yamaguchi prefecture), 50,000 koku.

⁹³ Chūzaemon is miswritten “Chūemon 忠右衛門.” Chūzaemon was in the first group, in the custody of the Hosokawa.

⁹⁴ This must be Hazama 間 Shinroku, the son of Kihyōe (Jūbyōe; number 17 of the first group) and younger brother of Jūjirō (in the fourth group, in the custody of the Mizuno).

⁹⁵ Mizuno Tadayuki 水野忠之 (1669–1731) was daimyo of Okazaki 岡崎 (present-day Aichi prefecture), 50,000 koku.

⁹⁶ There were in fact nine of the Akō rōnin in custody at the Mizuno mansion; see the following note.

⁹⁷ This name is perplexing, since it does not correspond to any known Akō retainer (although it seems closest to Tomimori Sukeemon, who appears above in the leadership group), and bears no resemblance to either of the two names that are missing here from the Mizuno group, Yokogawa Kanpei and Mimura Jirōzaemon 三村次郎左衛門. The stipend (7 ryō, 4 *nin-fuchi*) and age of 37, as well as the place on the list, would seem to correspond better to Yokogawa (6 ryō, 3 *nin-fuchi*, age 37) than to Mimura (also age 37, with a stipend of 6 koku in *kirimai* 切米, and 2 *nin-fuchi*).

Palanquins came from the houses of custody to receive the forty-six.⁹⁸ When Lord Inaba Hōki no kami 稲葉伯耆守⁹⁹ was asked how they should be treated, he said that since the men were not charged with serious crimes, the lords should treat them as they saw fit, and offer them proper meals (*nijūgosai* 二汁五菜) in the morning and the evening. All forty-six samurai were ordered to submit lists of their relatives for official inspection, to be turned over to the bakufu by the houses of custody. Those who had been part of the conspiracy but who defected were:¹⁰⁰ Nakamura Toshinosuke 中村利介 [Nakata Riheiiji 中田理平次], Yano Isuke 矢野伊介, Nakamura Seiemon 中村清右衛門, Seno Mago[za]emon 瀬尾孫右[左]衛門, Suzuki Jūhachirō 鈴木重八郎 [Suzuta Jūhachi 鈴木重八], Oyamada Shō[za]emon 小山田庄右[左]衛門, Tanaka Sadashirō 田中定[貞]四郎, and Mōri Koheiji [Koheita] 毛利小平次 [小平太].

⁹⁸ The preceding list contains only forty-five names, because of the omission of one from the final group.

⁹⁹ This must refer to Inaba Masayuki 稲葉正住 (1640–1715), daimyo of Sakura 佐倉 (present-day Chiba prefecture). He was the bakufu senior councilor (*rōjū* 老中) in charge at the time of the attack on Kira. His title, however, was Tango no kami 丹後守, not Hōki no kami.

¹⁰⁰ Corrections of the numerous errors in this list are shown in brackets.

The Story of the Loyal Samurai of Akō

MOTOORI NORINAGA

Translated by
FEDERICO MARCON

I have abbreviated a great deal, and am not recording everything.¹
I am writing down, just as my foolish ears heard it, the story told by the priest Jitsudō 実道 during a series of sermons at Jukyōji 樹敬寺 temple from the ninth month of Enkyō 延享 1 [1744], about how the retainers of Asano Takumi no kami Naganori 浅野内匠頭長[矩], lord of Ako castle in the province of Harima,²

THE TRANSLATOR is a Ph.D. candidate in Japanese history at Columbia University. He would like to thank Akiko Takeuchi of Columbia University for her assistance with the translation and Henry D. Smith II for guidance with the annotation.

The translation is based on the printed version of the original text included in MNZ 20, pp. 585–600. In an effort to convey the features of the original, presently known by the title *Akō gishi den* 赤穂義士伝, the editors of the printed version have noted interlinear interpolations, excisions, and corrections made by Norinaga. Here I have used parentheses to indicate interpolations. Where excisions and corrections are significant enough to affect the meaning, I have put them as well in parentheses and added a footnote. As mentioned in the introduction by Henry D. Smith and myself to this translation, Norinaga's text contains many irregularities and inconsistencies in orthography and the transcriptions of names. At the first occurrence of a proper name, I have given the orthography used there but I have not attempted to indicate later variations. In a few instances of irregularities in kanji usage, the standard kanji have been given in brackets. As Norinaga renders many names largely in kana, in such cases I have provided the kanji version in brackets or a footnote.

Norinaga demarcates sections of the narrative by double and single circles (for an example of the former, see the photograph of the opening lines in figure 1 of the introduction, p. xxx). I have tried to convey this segmentation through the addition of space between paragraphs, but have not distinguished between the two types of circle.

Full names, dates, and other details about the individual forty-seven rōnin themselves have been omitted here; these may be found in Akō-shi 1987, vol. 3, pp. 746–47. The bibliographic information for works cited here may be found in the list of references appended to the preceding article.

¹ As can be seen in the photograph of the opening lines (figure 1 of the introduction, pp. 442–43), these opening provisos appear set off on a separate line.

² As mentioned in the introduction, the name of the domain, located in the southwestern part of present-day Hyōgo prefecture, is today usually pronounced Akō. Norinaga, however, consistently renders it as Ako, and in the translation I have adhered to his reading.

took revenge on the enemy of their master under the leadership of Ōishi Kuranosuke Fujiwara no Yoshio 大いしらの介藤原のよしを.³ Since there are things I forgot to ask, however, circumstances of the events are sometimes not clear. There are also parts that I omitted, and places where I forgot, but I went ahead and wrote it down. There are said to be some twenty different accounts that record these events. The one related [by Jitsudō] is said to be based on a book of Ōishi's letters.

It all started the third month of the fourteenth year of Genroku 元禄 [禄; 1701], when Asano Takumi no kami Naganori, lord of Ako castle in the province of Harima, was appointed⁴ to the duty of hosting the imperial envoys (the former grand councilors Yanagihara 柳原 and Takano 高野)⁵ coming to Edo from the capital. Since Lord Kira Kōzuke no suke Yoshihide きら上野佐よしひで⁶ was well informed about such matters, all of those appointed to these duties were supposed to ask him about the proper procedures. Lord Takumi no kami thus also consulted him about what to do. Some among his retainers suggested to Takumi no kami that it would be appropriate to offer a present to Lord Kōzuke no suke when asking his advice, but Lord Takumi no kami said that, no, to do so would in fact be disrespectful to the one being consulted. To offer a gift at the first meeting was not proper. It would be more suitable to send a present later, after the consultation. He thus did not send a gift to Kōzuke no suke. But Kōzuke no suke was a greedy person, and he did not instruct Takumi no kami correctly and caused him repeated humiliation.

Prior to this, one night Lord Katō Tōtōmi no kami 加藤遠江守⁷ had paid a visit to Lord Takumi no kami's mansion. He had told Takumi no kami directly that it was customary for everybody appointed to such duties to ask Lord Kōzuke no suke for advice. He then had added that he wished to warn Takumi no kami about something. Handing over his two swords, he said, "Kōzuke no suke is a greedy person. If he does not receive a substantial gift, he acts offensively. In such a case, don't make the mistake of getting angry! I, too, have been insulted by him. I was tempted to strike him, but trying to stay calm and keeping in mind that it

³ 大石内蔵助藤原良雄.

⁴ The words "were appointed" are accompanied by a katakana interpolation, "this is known as the *kyōō no ichibokushi*"; *kyōō* is clearly 饗応 (reception), but the meaning of *ichibokushi* is unclear.

⁵ Yanagihara Saki no gondainagon Sukekado 柳原前大納言資廉 (1644–1712) and Takano Saki no chūnagon Yasuharu 高野前中納言保春 (1650–1712), envoys to Edo of Emperor Higashiyama 東山 (1675–1709; r. 1687–1709).

⁶ Kira's given name was Yoshinaka 義央 (also read Yoshihisa); the error of writing it as 義英 (Yoshihide) began as early as Muro Kyūsō's 室鳩巢 *Akō gijin roku* 赤穂義人録 of 1703 (see p. 274), and was widespread in the early chronicles of the Akō incident.

⁷ Earlier sources reported this to be Katō Tōtōmi no kami Yasuzane 泰実; see *Akō gijin roku*, p. 276; and *Sekijō gishinden*, pp. 5–7. But as a note to *Akō gijin roku* in NST 27 points out, Yasuzane must be an error for Yasutsune 泰恒 (1657–1715), daimyo of Ōzu 大洲 domain (in present-day Ehime prefecture) from 1675 until his death. Yasuzane was a monk and the younger brother of Yasutsune. The whole story is probably apocryphal.

was an important occasion, restrained myself. However he insults you and however much you feel you can no longer bear it, you, too, should keep your wits and bear with it.” Having said this, he took back his swords and left.

The day before the imperial envoys were to arrive at Zōjōji 僧[増]上寺,⁸ Takumi no kami asked Kōzuke no suke, “Is there an established form for readying the lodging for the imperial envoys?”

“No,” Kōzuke no suke replied, “There is no particular form. Just leave everything as it is.”

But Takumi no kami later heard from Lord Date Ukyō no suke 伊達右京佐,⁹ who had been appointed to the same duty, that Kōzuke no suke had ordered that the walls should be replastered and the tatami mats changed. Lord Takumi no kami was greatly surprised and angered. He had to replaster the walls and change more than three hundred tatami in just one night. Such humiliations were repeatedly inflicted upon him.

For the ceremony of the shogun’s reply to the emperor, Takumi no kami once again asked Kōzuke no suke for advice: “For the ceremony of the reply, should I go to the castle dressed in *kamishimo* 上下[袴], or in *shōzoku* 装束?”¹⁰

“You will be going together with Lord Ukyō,” Kōzuke no suke replied. “Do the same as he does.”

When Lord Ukyō came to get him, Takumi no kami saw that he was wearing the usual *kamishimo*. Takumi no kami therefore also wore the same dress to the castle. Once there, however, Lord Ukyō changed his clothes and put on *shōzoku*. Takumi no kami was astonished. How was it, he thought, that Kōzuke no suke should bear him such a grudge as to insult him like this. How detestable! How mortifying! Why, he wondered bitterly, had Kōzuke no suke not told him to bring *shōzoku* to change into at the castle. He hurried back to the main gate, where his retainers were waiting for him, and ordered them to go back to his residence to get his *shōzoku*, so that he could change his dress for the ceremony.

Then, just when the imperial envoys were about to arrive, Lord Takumi no kami saw that the laces of Lord Date Ukyō’s ceremonial hat were woven of twisted thread (*yorihibo*[*mo*] ヨリヒボ [縷紐]), while his were the usual flat laces (*uchihibo*[*mo*] ウチヒボ [打紐]). He asked Lord Sakyō about this. “Lord Kōzuke no suke told me that to wear flat laces would be disrespectful toward the imperial envoys and that I should wear twisted laces instead,” was the reply.

⁸ A Buddhist temple of the Jōdo school, Zōjōji was one of the main shogunal temples in Edo and housed the mausoleum of the second shogun, Hidetada 秀忠. Such temples were regularly used as lodgings for imperial and foreign envoys.

⁹ This was Date Sakyō no suke Muratoyo 村豊 (1682–1737), daimyo of Yoshida 吉田 domain (in modern-day Ehime prefecture). Norinaga first wrote the title correctly as Sakyō 左京, but then crossed it out and changed it to Ukyō. Below he tends to use Ukyō but in one instance transcribes the title as Sakyō.

¹⁰ *Kamishimo* was the ordinary ceremonial dress of the samurai; it consisted of a *kataginu* 肩衣 (a sleeveless waistcoat with wide crested shoulders) and hakama of the same color as the under-robe. *Shōzoku* was the round-collared court dress worn for more formal occasions.

Lord Takumi no kami, greatly angered, asked himself why Kōzuke no suke should humiliate him so. How detestable! How mortifying! He thought he could no longer put up with it, but he had not forgotten what Lord Katō Tōtōmi no kami had told him, and he struggled to hide his anger and to calm himself. He took out from his bosom a piece of paper and twisted it into a string. Then, (cutting his finger,) he dyed the paper lace with his blood and used it in place of the flat lace of his hat.

In addition to such humiliations, Kōzuke no suke told every person he encountered that, despite his detailed instructions, Takumi no kami was ignoring his directions and simply acting of his own accord. Being slandered in this way, Asano Takumi no kami Naganori finally could bear it no longer and struck Kira Kōzuke no suke. But because his sword hit a metallic piece inside Kira's hat, he did not succeed in killing him. Kōzuke no suke quickly ran away and escaped. Kajikawa Yosōbyōe 梶川興よさう兵へ¹¹ grabbed Takumi no kami from behind and restrained him. (As a result of Takumi no kami's breach of the etiquette of the castle),¹² there was a great uproar among the retainers of the daimyo, and word that there had been a fight at the castle spread quickly throughout Edo.

But as soon as people heard that the fight was between Asano Takumi no kami and Kōzuke no suke, the uproar quieted down.

On account of his breach of the etiquette of the castle, Lord Takumi no kami was first put into the custody of Lord Tamura Ukyō 田村右京,¹³ and then ordered to commit seppuku the same day.

Takumi no kami's retainers, Hayami Tōzaemon ハヤミタウザヘモン [早水藤左衛門] and Kayano Sanpei かや野さん平 [茅野三平] hurried together back to Ako in Harima, changing horses along the way and not stopping to rest.¹⁴ They covered a distance of more than 150 *ri* 里¹⁵ in just three days and a half.

The day Lord Takumi no kami was ordered to commit seppuku, his retainers all came to receive their lord's remains. Waiting in the room next to the one where he was kept in custody, they begged many times to be allowed to meet their lord one last time, but to no avail.¹⁶ Takumi no kami, knowing that only one thin

¹¹ Kajikawa Yosobyōe Yoriteru 梶川与惣兵衛頼照 (1647–1723). For his record of the incident, see *Kajikawa-shi nikki* 梶川氏日記; in Akō-shi 1987, vol. 3, pp. 5–9. The name by which Kajikawa was commonly known (his *tsūshō* 通称 or *yobina* 呼び名) is usually read today as Yosōbei or Yosobei. Norinaga, however, indicates with furigana here the reading of Yosōbyōe. Below, both where furigana is provided and where it is not, I have transcribed names with –兵へ or –兵衛 as –hyōe (–byōe).

¹² The editors of Norinaga's text indicate that he crossed out the phrase in parentheses.

¹³ Tamura Ukyō taifu Tateaki 田村右京大夫建顕 (1656–1708), was daimyo of Ichinoseki 一関, in present-day Iwate prefecture.

¹⁴ As Tanabe 1999 (no. 541), p. 1, points out, the messengers in fact went by palanquin rather than horseback; express horses had apparently been prohibited under Tsunayoshi's animal protection laws.

¹⁵ One *ri* was a little less than four kilometers.

¹⁶ A scene very similar to this appears in act 4 of *Kanadehon chūshingura*; see Keene 1971, p. 70. The inspiration may have come from the memorandum by Okado Denpachirō 多門伝八郎, a

paper door separated him from his retainers, raised his voice and said: “Although I am ready to commit seppuku, I regret not being able to kill Kōzuke no suke. Even after I die, this regret will stay with me. I will hold this grudge forever, however many times I may be reborn and however many realms of existence I may pass through, until I see the severed head of Kōzuke no suke.” (He then held up in reverence the sword given him by the shogun) and cut his belly. Isoda Budayū いそ[磯]田武大夫 thereupon struck off his head.¹⁷

In accordance with the procedure of the time for conducting seppuku, a square cotton quilt three *shaku* 尺 long on each side was spread out.¹⁸ One man was stationed at each of the four corners of the quilt, and a folding screen was set behind it. The person committing seppuku sat on the quilt. After his head had fallen, the four men stationed at the corners wrapped his body up in the quilt and put it into a coffin, around which they set the screen. The retainers of the deceased could then collect the body and bury it. He was given the posthumous name of Reikōinden Suimōgenri Daikōji れいかう院殿すいもうげんり大居士[冷光院殿吹毛元利].

At Ako castle, all the retainers, beginning with Ōishi Kuranosuke Fujiwara no Yoshio, were busy with their daily duties in the absence of their lord. Ōishi Kuranosuke had many things to take care of, but that day he was feeling anxious. When he left the castle, he saw that bees had made a huge nest under the eaves of the gate and that they were fighting fiercely against some hornets. At that sight, he felt even more anxious.¹⁹ Walking down from the castle, Kuranosuke looked in the direction of Osaka and saw two horsemen racing toward the castle, raising a cloud of dust. When they got nearer, he recognized them to be Hayami Tōzaemon and Kayano Sanpei. The two men fell from their horses as if dead. Hurrying toward them, Kuranosuke raised them up and asked what had happened; they told him the situation.

Ōishi Kuranosuke was stunned. Since new reports might come any minute, he stayed awake all night. The following morning near dawn, Hara Sōemon はらさう右衛門 [原惣右衛門], too, arrived by horseback in great haste. He, too, appeared on the brink of death from exhaustion. Kuranosuke gave him something to drink to revive him and pulled him up from the ground. When he came to, the tears coursed down his face in torrents. He took out from his bosom a slip of paper on which was written the posthumous name of their lord and, sobbing, handed it to Ōishi Kuranosuke.

bakufu inspector who witnessed Asano's seppuku and reported that Kataoka Gengoemon 片岡源五右衛門, one of the retainers closest to Naganori, begged to be permitted a final farewell, and was permitted to view his master from a separate room; see *Okado Denpachirō oboegaki*, pp. 171–72. The Okado memorandum seems not to have been widely known in the early years after the incident, however, and none of the early chronicles mention this episode.

¹⁷ Or Butayū, bakufu inspector (*metsuke* 目付). The editors indicate that Norinaga crossed out the phrase in parentheses in the previous sentence.

¹⁸ One *shaku* is 30.3 centimeters.

¹⁹ For this story, see the introduction, pp. 454–55. Here Norinaga has simply *hachi* 蜂 (bee), not *kobachi* 小蜂 (wasp) as in *Sekijō gishinden* and *Akō seigi*.

(FORGOT)²⁰

The retainers all gathered at the castle. Ōishi Kuranosuke went up to the upper level of the room and addressed the assembled retainers. “Our lord, Takumi no kami, was ordered to commit seppuku because he had acted disrespectfully inside the shogun’s castle. He was granted a sword to disembowel himself. Since he has left no heirs, it is certain that the government will send a military force to take possession of the castle. When that moment comes, should we ultimately agree to give up the castle? Or should we plan to make this castle our tomb and fight to the death?”

Among the retainers, there were those who thought that they should all commit seppuku, accompanying their lord to the afterlife. Others preferred to live and sought to run away. One of the retainers, Okuno Shōgen ヲクノ野将監, said: “Kuranosuke, you should tell us what to do.”²¹

“Under normal circumstances,” Kuranosuke replied, “it is the lord who gives his opinion first, then the councilors discuss the matter; afterwards the rest follow in turn. But now, it seems to me, that kind of distinction no longer applies. Who will serve as my right arm when we attack Kira Kōzuke no suke?” And he looked around at the retainers.

(FORGOT)

“Today we had better leave the castle and go home. Tomorrow, whoever among you thinks that we should die fighting should come to the castle.”

Everybody left the castle.

The following day, about 130 men gathered in the castle. Among them were some who, in despair over the situation, thought that they ought to cut their belly right away. They gathered earlier than the others. Kuranosuke began to speak. “I have an idea,” he said. “Considering the position of Lord Matsudaira Aki no kami 松平安芸守²² and others of the main branch of the Asano house, and considering that Lord Daigaku 大学,²³ the younger brother of our lord, Takumi no kami, is presently under house arrest, we should first send a petition to Edo. Even if it should not be granted, we should try to secure the succession of the Asano family.” He thereupon sent Tagawa たがわ and Tsukioka つきおか²⁴ to Edo to submit the petition.

²⁰ Norinaga inserted a bracketed *wasure*, *wasure nari*, or simply *wa* to indicate points he had forgotten. See figure 1 in the introduction, second line from the end.

²¹ Okuno Shōgen Sadayoshi 奥野将監定良 (1646–1727) held the position of *kumigashira* 組頭 with a 1,000-koku stipend. He was related to Ōishi Kuranosuke through his mother and was a member of the league until dropping out in the eighth month of 1702.

²² Asano Aki no kami Tsunanaga 浅野安芸守綱長 (1659–1708), daimyo of Hiroshima 広島. Tsunanaga, like various other daimyo mentioned below, had been granted the honor of use of the surname Matsudaira, the original name of the Tokugawa house. Norinaga follows the standard convention of referring to him by this honorary surname rather than his original surname of Asano.

²³ Asano Daigaku Nagahiro 浅野大学長広 (1670–1734).

²⁴ Tagawa (or Takawa or Ōkawa) Kuzaemon (or Kyūzaemon) 多川九左衛門 (400 koku) and Tsukioka Jiemon 月岡治右衛門 (300 koku) both initially joined the league of revenge in Akō but later dropped out.

While some were satisfied with this proposal, others were not. After hearing Kuranosuke's words, a man named Ōno Kurobyōe 大野くろ兵へ protested: "If Lord Daigaku is granted the right to continue the house, we could all continue to serve him without disruption. At first I thought that all those who did not come to the castle would lose their stipends, and I planned to gather here early in the morning, but unfortunately I was late because of some important duty. Now I am going to kill myself!" Kuranosuke, laughing to himself, tried to stop him, saying that the two messengers were now on their way to Edo with the petition. But Kurobyōe would not listen to him. "I will commit seppuku here and now," he screamed, "and accompany my lord to the other world!" Somehow people dissuaded him. It was because he was this sort of person that he later made a fool of himself.²⁵ (FORGOT)

Eventually everybody left the castle. Kuranosuke, too, went home. He had a son by a concubine; the son's name was Chikara Yoshikane チカラヨシカネ.²⁶ After Kuranosuke had retired to his bedroom, Chikara pulled out from his father's chest pocket the piece of paper on which was written the posthumous name of Lord Takumi no kami. Thinking of their indebtedness to their lord, he grieved deeply. He wanted to follow his master to the other world, and was about to disembowel himself. But then his father appeared from behind him. Realizing his son's feelings, Kuranosuke stopped him and said: "Although I did not say this to anyone, I will not rest until I take the head of Kira Kōzuke no suke and offer it at the grave of my lord to assuage his bitter regret."²⁷

He wrote down his name, Ōishi Kuranosuke Fujiwara no Yoshio, and the name of his son, Chikara Yoshikane. They cut their little fingers and sealed the paper with their blood. (Thus the first two of the forty-seven retainers who would attack Kōzuke no suke were decided).

Later when another meeting was held at the castle to sign a vow [to fight to protect the castle], Ōno Kurobyōe, Itō Goemon 伊藤五右衛門,²⁸ and other cowardly samurai ran away. (At that time there were about fifty men remaining.)

(FORGOT)

The messengers sent to Edo submitted the petition to Toda Uneme no kami

²⁵ Ōno Kurobyōe, or Kurobei 大野久郎兵衛 (dates unknown), like Kuranosuke was a councilor (*karō* 家老) of the Akō domain. He disagreed with Kuranosuke's faction over the disposition of the domain's financial reserves, and is said to have ended up stealing money and fleeing from Akō. Ōno was demonized as a coward and villain even before the attack on Kira in *Sekijō meiden* 赤城盟伝, a history of the league written by Kanzaki Yōgorō 神崎与五郎 and others (see Akōshi 1987, vol. 3, p. 263; and Smith 2002, p. 14). This depiction was perpetuated in Muro Kyūsō's *Akō gijin roku*; see pp. 170–80. Kurobei would be immortalized as a villain in *Kanadehon chūshingura* as Ono Kudayū 斧九太夫.

²⁶ 主税良金 (1688–1703). For Chikara as the son of a concubine, see note 40 below.

²⁷ Norinaga originally wrote ハラサント思ふ ("I plan to assuage. . ."), but crossed it out and replaced it with the more emphatic ハラサズンバアラズ ("I will not rest until . . . I assuage").

²⁸ Itō Goemon (430 koku) held the position of *kumigashira* and was the younger brother of Ōno Kurobyōe (Kurobei).

戸田采女正, a relative of Takumi no kami.²⁹ Their request was refused, however, and they were informed that the daimyo appointed to confiscate the castle had already left Edo. Returning to Ako, they reported the situation. Kuranosuke again summoned the retainers to meet at the castle. He took a seat on the upper level of the room and read the response aloud.

(FORGOT)

That day, too, he sent everybody home, telling them that the following day they should say farewell to their wives and children and ready themselves to die defending the castle. He told them to bring their armor and weapons to the castle, and to prepare to sustain a siege. Kuranosuke, too, went home, but at midnight, he returned to the castle and waited. All the others whose minds were set came soon after. Ōishi Kuranosuke then said to them:

“Until now I have told you that we should die fighting here in the castle, but it was so as to see your true feelings. In fact my intention is to take the head of Kōzuke no suke, whom our lord tried to kill, carry the head to the grave of our lord, and then commit seppuku. I think that this is the only way to appease the tormented spirit of our lord. We will give up the castle without protest and then seek an opportunity to strike Kōzuke no suke.” (An extended debate followed these words, but for reasons of brevity I have recorded only the main point.)

The generals in charge of the confiscation of the castle were Wakizaka Awaji no kami ワキザカアワジ守 and Kinoshita Higo no kami 木下ヒゴ守,³⁰ the government officials accompanying them were Araki Jūzaemon 荒木十左衛門 and Yanagihara Uneme 柳原采女,³¹ and the local magistrates Okada Shōdayu 岡田庄大夫 and Ishihara Shinzaemon 石原新左衛門.³² They all headed toward the Ako domain. The daimyo in the nearby provinces alerted their forces, anticipating that if the Ako retainers offered resistance they would be expected to aid the government force. The daimyo in nearby provinces with access to the sea readied their war boats. Ako was surrounded from all directions.³³ Houses related to Takumi no

²⁹ Toda Uneme no kami Ujisada 戸田采女正氏定 (1659–1719) was daimyo of the domain of Ōgaki 大垣, in present-day Gifu prefecture, and a younger cousin of Asano Naganori. The order of events described here is a bit confused: the petition was intended for the bakufu inspectors Araki Masaha 荒木政羽 and Sakakibara Masayoshi 榊原政殊 (see below, note 31), and when Tagawa and Tsukioka discovered that the group appointed to receive the castle had already left Edo, they were unsure what to do and ended up taking the petition to Toda, whom they knew to be the key intermediary in Edo for the Asano family of Akō. In a subsequent letter to Ōishi, Toda expressed his unhappiness that such a petition had been attempted.

³⁰ Both of these “generals” (*bushō* 武將) were middle-level daimyo: Wakizaka Awaji no kami Yasuteru 脇坂淡路守安照 (1658–1722) was daimyo of Tatsuno 竜野, in present-day Hyōgo prefecture, and Kinoshita Higo no kami Kinsada 木下肥後守公定 (1653–1730) was daimyo of Ashimori 足守, in present-day Okayama prefecture.

³¹ Araki Jūzaemon Masaha (1662–1732) and Sakakibara (not Yanagihara) Uneme Masayoshi (died 1722) were bakufu inspectors (*metsuke* 目付).

³² Okada Shōdayū Toshinobu 俊陳 (1652–1726) and Ishihara Shinzaemon Masauji 正氏 (d. 1710) were bakufu local magistrates (*daikan* 代官) appointed to administer the Akō domain lands after the departure of the Asano retainers.

³³ Norinaga crossed out here the sentence “In the castle, because of the mourning for their lord, they had shrouded the turrets.”

kami also sent messengers to observe the situation. They warned his retainers to surrender the castle quickly; otherwise they would be attacked from all directions and destroyed. There were forces camped everywhere. Inoue Dan'emon イノウエダン右衛門,³⁴ a messenger sent by the lord of the main house, Matsudaira Aki no kami, entered the castle. "Will you surrender the castle?" he asked Kuranosuke. "Look at all the troops surrounding you. If they attack you with a force like this, there will be no possibility to withstand them. Will you surrender the castle or not? That is what I am here to ask."

"Do not threaten us!" replied Kuranosuke. "Even though we may be surrounded by a huge army, it bothers me less than a fly would. Whether or not we shall surrender the castle has nothing to do with you." And he sent the messenger back.

But having a larger plan in mind, Kuranosuke had already decided to surrender the castle. So as to prevent the soiling of his late lord's reputation, he ordered the entire castle cleaned and repaired, from the paths and bridges to the interior of the buildings, and prepared spots for resting at various places. In this way he readied the castle to be surrendered to the government officials.

The officials sent a messenger to the castle to summon Kuranosuke. They read him the shogun's order that the castle was to be surrendered and the various laws obeyed, and indicated that he should respond. Although Kuranosuke was the kind of man who would not lose his composure even if heaven and earth were falling apart, he was so mortified and chagrined that he could not reply. He signed his name to the order with a quivering hand and returned to the castle. In the castle, all had been waiting for Kuranosuke's return and they asked him about the meeting. Kuranosuke told them about the orders, and they realized that that night was the last they would spend in the castle. The castle had been like their own home, and the thought (that now it was going to be someone else's possession) filled their hearts with sadness and made them all cry.³⁵

All of them had been maintaining a strict vigil, guarding against fire and the like, but now they left their positions and climbed the turrets of the castle and looked around at the troops that were surrounding them in all directions. They looked toward the sea and saw the hundreds of war boats lined up. Kuranosuke looked at the pennants and lanterns of the camps of the various forces arrayed around the castle, and recognized the commander of each. "Suppose we were now to fight to the death in this castle," he told his men. "Let's talk about how we would deploy our men against these forces, just for the sake of diversion." He let the others propose their ideas, and then advanced his own. But soon dawn would break, the government envoys would enter the castle, and all the weapons in the castle would be inspected and handed over.

The next morning, making sure that everything was in perfect condition, they waited for the government officials. The officials, Sakakibara Uneme no kami

³⁴ Inoue Dan'emon Masanobu 井上団右衛門正信.

³⁵ Norinaga crossed out the phrase in parentheses.

榊原采女正, Araki Jūzaemon, Ishihara Seizaemon, and Okada Shōdayu,³⁶ all entered through the main gate. Kuranosuke and the other retainers were waiting for them and guided them in. The bows, rifles, and all the other weapons were all checked and handed over. The government envoys inspected every room of the castle and put their seal on each. “Up to now,” Kuranosuke thought, “I was determined that, no matter how formidable our enemies might be, I would never allow them to step into the castle so long as there was breath in my body. I never imagined that I would have to guide them to examine every single room of the castle.” He struggled not to cry as he led the envoys through the castle. When they stopped to rest, Kuranosuke knelt before them with his forehead to the ground and said: “I humbly beg that Takumi no kami’s younger brother Daigaku may be allowed to continue the Asano house and that the retainers of the domain may continue to serve and not be dispersed as rōnin. Please, convey my petition to the shogun once you have returned to Edo.”

But the officials did not deign to reply. They simply stood and ordered him to continue to guide them. When he showed them the second enceinte, Kuranosuke again knelt down by the earthen bridge and, pressing his head to the ground, repeated his plea, but once more the officials paid no attention. Instead, they harshly ordered him to continue guiding them through the castle. Full of resentment, Kuranosuke proceeded with the tour of inspection. Some of the retainers were so frustrated that they were about to attack the magistrates. Barely able to restrain them, Kuranosuke completed the tour. Now they all had to leave the castle. How mortified they must have felt! The same day the castle was handed over to Lord Wakizaka Awaji no kami.

All the retainers returned to their homes and cried out loud.

The castle was surrendered in beautiful condition. There were no tears in the paper doors, and the tatami and everything else were in perfect shape.

When the government officials returned to the inn where they were lodging, they summoned Kuranosuke. “Earlier today,” they told him, “when you handed over the castle, you knelt down near the earthen bridge, pressing your head to the ground, and pleaded with us. We heard your words, but our position did not allow us to give you an answer. However, your appeal reached our heart. When we, Uneme and Jūzaemon, return to Edo, we will make sure to transmit it to those above us.”

Kuranosuke thanked them and left. All the others were waiting for Kuranosuke at his lodgings, and they asked him what had happened. He told them and sent them home. Then he ordered his son Yoshikane to bring him a brazier. Yoshikane

³⁶ The names of these four bakufu officials were all provided earlier in kanji (see p. 474), but with three differences: 1) the previous “Yanagihara” is changed here to “Sakakibara,” the correct name; 2) the previous “Shinzaemon” is given here in katakana, erroneously, as “Seizaemon”; and 3) the previous “Uneme” here becomes “Uneme no kami.” One can only speculate about the circumstances responsible for these differences. The correct characters for names like this could not in most cases be guessed from the sound, so Norinaga must have inquired, perhaps of Jitsudō, who may have given contradictory answers.

thought that his father's request was strange, since it was the fourth month and it would be strange to use a brazier in that season. He did as his father asked, however, and brought the brazier. Kuranosuke took out their pledge, tore it into pieces, and burned it.

"Father, you should commit seppuku!" burst out Yoshikane, who was watching from the side. "Now I understand your real intention. You have surrendered the castle with the excuse that you would instead attack Kōzuke no suke. And now, hoping to save your life, you are burning our pledge! Even if you are my father, on behalf of our lord, I cannot spare your life. You must commit seppuku at once! I will act as your second. What do you say?"

Kuranosuke deliberately did not reply. To test his son's seriousness, he made no excuse and said, "What will you do, then?" "I will kill you!" Yoshikane replied, and he struck at his father with his sword. Kuranosuke quickly restrained him and said: "The reason I burned our vow is because we would be compromised if somebody discovered it. Even without a written statement, a true samurai does not change his heart. That is why I burned it. What an impudent fool you are!" But even as he said this, in his heart, Kuranosuke praised his son.³⁷

ABBR. I will skip the matter of Okajima Yasoemon ヲカジマヤソ[岡嶋八十]右衛門 and Ōno Kurobei.³⁸

ABBR. I will skip the matter of Kuranosuke's visit to Kagakuji クワガク寺 temple.³⁹

Yoshikane was the son of a concubine; he had been separated from his real mother when he was seven years old.⁴⁰ Nonetheless, had his stepmother, Kuranosuke's primary wife, been his true mother, he could not have been more devoted to or cared more for her, and she, in the same way, could not have cared more for him had he been her true son. Kuranosuke and his primary wife had two other sons: the elder, Kichijiyo キチヂヨ,⁴¹ was thirteen years old, and the younger, Daizaburō 大三郎,⁴² was two years old.

³⁷ No earlier or later example of this revealing story has yet been found.

³⁸ The story here must have involved the debates over how to dispose of the domain finances, over which Okajima and Ōno differed. Norinaga transcribes Ōno's name in this instance in kana as "Kurobei." From here on, at various points, he indicates by the word *ryaku* 略 that he is skipping or abbreviating part of Jitsudō's narrative.

³⁹ Built in 1663 on the occasion of the thirty-third anniversary of the death of Asano Naganori's father, Nagashige 長重, Kagakuji 花岳寺 served as the Asano family temple in Akō.

⁴⁰ Yoshikane's age would be six by Western count. The ages mentioned below, too, should be reduced by one year to obtain that by Western count. The allegation that Yoshikane (Chikara) was the son of a concubine and not of Kuranosuke's wife Riku りく (or 理玖) is erroneous, and has not yet been found in any other account.

⁴¹ Or Kichichiyo 吉千代; born in 1691, he was the second son of Kuranosuke and his wife, Riku. He entered a Buddhist monastery at twelve and later took vows as a priest of the Ōbaku 黄檗 school of Zen at Kōkokuji 興国寺, in Yura 由良 (present-day Hyōgo prefecture), and died in 1709 in his nineteenth year.

⁴² This is the childhood name of Ōishi Sotoe Yoshiyasu 大石外衛良恭 (1702-1770); the third son of Kuranosuke and Riku, he was born in the seventh month of 1702, after his parents had parted and Riku had returned to her family home in Toyooka 豊岡 (present-day Hyōgō prefecture).

Kuranosuke's wife summoned Kichijiyo: "It may be," she said, "that you will have to die within the night."

"If I must die, then I will," Kichijiyo replied, "but first I would like to know the reason."

"Your father is going to Edo to take the head of Kōzuke no suke," his mother said. "As you are not yet fifteen years old, you are to be left behind. You already carry the two swords, however, and have the duty to uphold your honor as a samurai. Implore, then, your older brother Yoshikane to take you with the others, and tell him, if that is not possible, you will commit seppuku."

She had him put on a white kimono with pale blue *kamishimo* and sent him to Yoshikane's room. She followed behind, taking her halberd with her. Kichijiyo went to his brother and spoke as he had been told. (I FORGOT WHAT THE BROTHER SAID.)

(FORGOT)

Kuranosuke summoned his wife, Yoshikane, and Kichijiyo. "As I am sure you realize, I am going to Edo," he said his wife. "Since I have made a pledge not to say anything to even my wife or children, I can't reveal my intentions. The reason I am leaving my son Kichijiyo behind is so that, should my revenge not be successful and I die, you should bring him and his brother up, and have them carry on my revenge. If I succeed in killing my enemy, have them take the ton-sure and pray for us. That's why I am leaving them at home."

He drank a cup of sake in parting and took his last leave of this world from them. He embarked on a ship, and as it left his hometown far behind, he turned back in tears to gaze at it. Eventually the ship reached Osaka.

The Ako retainers had decided among themselves that they would hide in different places around Osaka, Kyoto, Fushimi 伏見, and Ōtsu 大津. Kuranosuke alone would go to Edo, so as to check on what was happening there, and would let the others know the best moment to attack. All would then hurry there.

When Kuranosuke reached Osaka, he visited Hara Sōemon. Kuranosuke told Sōemon that he was going to Edo to observe the situation, and that when he sent a summons, Sōemon should lead all the other retainers to Edo. Kuranosuke then went to Kyoto and visited Zuikōin ずいくわう院. The temple was closely related to the family of his lord, and the abbot was a relative of Takumi no kami's wife. Kuranosuke met the abbot and gave him 250 ryō in gold to build a grave for his master. He also bought a plot of land for the graves of all the retainers.⁴³ After

⁴³ The connection between Zuikōin 瑞光院, a subtemple of Daitokuji 大徳寺, and the Asano family was established through Asano Naganori's wife Akuri 阿久里 (or 阿久利; 1674–1714), known after Naganori's death as Yōzeiin (or, as Norinaga has it below, Yōsen'in 瑤泉院), and the temple received an annual grant of one hundred koku from the Asano family. A memorial marker for Asano Naganori was erected there by Ōishi in the eighth month of 1701, and in 1719, on the seventeenth memorial of the death of the Akō rōnin, forty-six markers were placed near the monument to Asano. The temple and the stone memorials were moved to their present location in Yamashina in 1962.

discussing the details, he left the temple and spent the night at an inn in Sanjō 三条.

When Kuranosuke arrived in Edo, he went to the Asano family temple of Sengakuji せんがく寺, where his lord was buried, and paid homage at his grave. He then went to the house of Komeya Chūdayū 米屋ちう[忠]大夫 in Hamamatsu-chō ハママツ丁[浜松町],⁴⁴ where he had an introduction, and settled in there.⁴⁵

ABBR. I will not record the details of how Kuranosuke and [Horibe] Yasubyōe やす兵へ, without realizing each other's identity, got into a fight.⁴⁶

Horibe Yahyōe Kanamaru ホリベ[堀部]弥兵へ金丸 and his son-in-law Yasubyōe were Ako samurai who had been stationed in Edo. While waiting for Kuranosuke to arrive in Edo, anxious to avenge their lord, they used to stroll around Kira Kōzuke no suke's mansion disguised as street peddlers, or as beggars, or as daily workers. In this way they patrolled Kira's mansion to check the situation, but it was always guarded extremely closely.

Kuranosuke went to pay his respects to the people who had taken charge of the confiscation of the castle. Then he met Yōsen'in ヤウセン[瑤泉]院, his lord's wife, who was staying with Lord Asano Tosa no kami,⁴⁷ a relative of Takumi no kami. After talking with them, he returned to Komeya Chūdayū's house.

ABBR. I will skip recording the events concerning Fuwa no Kazuemon Masatane フワのカズエモンマサタネ[不破数右衛門正種].

Kuranosuke pondered Kōzuke no suke's precautions and the tight guard around his mansion; it would be better, he decided, to return to Kyoto for the moment. He thus sent his son Chikara Yoshikane on ahead.

ABBR. I will not record the details of how Ōno Kurobyōe and his son brought shame on themselves.

On the fourteenth day of the eighth month, the monthly anniversary of their lord's death, the former retainers who were in Edo, including Kuranosuke, Horibe Yahyōe Kanamaru, his son-in-law Yasubyōe, Nakamura Kansuke 中村カンスケ [勘介], Kanzaki Yōgorō Noriyasu カンザキヨ五郎ノリヤス[神崎与五郎則休], Kawamura Denbyōe 川村デン[伝]兵へ, and Yokogawa Kanpei 横川ヨコカワカンヘイ[勘

⁴⁴ The contributions of Komeya Chūdayū to the league both during Kuranosuke's first trip to Edo and again in the weeks leading up to the attack on Kira are well documented; see the summary in *Akō gishi jiten*, p. 386.

⁴⁵ While Jitsudō has Ōishi going directly to Edo after stopping only briefly in Kyoto to visit Zuikōin, in fact he settled first in Yamashina and went to Edo several months later, in the tenth month of 1701, staying for about one month.

⁴⁶ As Tanabe 1999 (no. 544), p. 3, notes, it is tantalizing not to know more of this account of a fight between the two great rivals in the league, Ōishi Kuranosuke and Horibe Yasubei 堀部安兵衛. No such episode is found anywhere else.

⁴⁷ This was Asano Nagasumi 浅野長澄 (1671–1714), daimyo of Miyoshi 三次 (a branch domain of Hiroshima) and a nephew of Takumi no kami's wife. Born as second son of the lord of the main Asano house in Hiroshima, he had been adopted by the lord of Miyoshi.

平], visited the grave of their lord. They rented a small room at Sengakuji and talked together. All wanted to take vengeance on their enemy as soon as possible, to take Kōzuke no suke's head without a day's further delay. Kuranosuke alone remained calm and explained the dangers of acting impetuously. Impressed by his arguments, the others decided that he should act as their leader, and thereafter returned home.

Kuranosuke, too, returned to Komeya Chūdayū's house.

ABBR. I will not record the details of how Matsudaira Aki no kami [the head of the Asano main house] sent a message to Kuranosuke by Watanabe Kumaemon ワタナベクマ右衛門.

Kuranosuke had some retainers remain in Edo and sent the others all back to Kyoto. After paying a visit to the Ise shrines, he, too, went back to Kyoto.

ABBR. I will not record the details of how Kuranosuke met on the street the physician Terai Genkei 寺井元ケイ.⁴⁸

Kuranosuke's son Chikara Yoshikane, who had returned to Kyoto before him, was staying with their friend Shindō Genshirō シンドウ源四郎,⁴⁹ in the village of Nishinoyama 西ヤマ, in Yamashina. Kuranosuke joined him there.

Thereupon, Kuranosuke purposely started behaving so as to become an object of public contempt, with the aim of getting Kōzuke no suke to loosen his guard. He indulged in various frivolous activities. He gathered good timber and built a splendid house in Nishinoyama village, purchased some fields, and lived in luxury.

ABBR. I will not record the details of how Kuranosuke schemed to spread the popularity of Inari いなり.⁵⁰

Kuranosuke began to spend an immense amount of money on a courtesan named Ukifune うき船, from a house in Shimoku-machi シモク町 in Fushimi.⁵¹ He also

⁴⁸ Terai Genkei 寺井玄溪 (1622–1711) was an Akō domain doctor residing in Kyoto whom Ōishi trusted deeply; he had wanted to join in the attack on Kira himself, but Ōishi urged him rather to live on and tell the story of the league. See Ōishi's letter to Terai of 1702.8.6, in Akō-shi 1987, vol. 3, p. 297.

⁴⁹ Shindō Genshirō Toshimoto 進藤源四郎俊式 (1651–1731) was an Asano retainer with a post of *ashigarugashira* 足輕頭 and a stipend of 400 koku; he was related to Ōishi Kuranosuke in several ways: his mother was the sister of Ōishi's grandfather, his first wife was Ōishi's aunt, and he adopted Ōishi's daughter Ruri ルリ (see genealogy in Akō-shi 1987, vol. 1, p. 366). The Shindō family held land in the Yamashina area east of Kyoto, and it was here, in the village of Nishinoyama, that Genshirō arranged for Ōishi to live after his departure from Akō. The story mentioned below of Ōishi building a fine house on the property is unattested.

⁵⁰ "Inari" may indicate the popular Fushimi Inari shrine, and hence serve as a metonymic reference to the Fushimi pleasure quarter itself.

⁵¹ This woman, presumably fictional, appears in other accounts as Ukiohashi 浮橋. See the discussion in the introduction, p. 458. The place-name, 撞木町, is usually pronounced Shumoku-machi.

visited a woman called Okaru おかる.⁵² He dressed her in an elegant outfit and strolled around the city with her. He did many outlandish things. Therefore, not only people in the capital, but also those from the nearby provinces derided him. But there were also other people who suspected that he was secretly plotting something.

As a consequence of all this, the other retainers, too, came to regard him with suspicion, thinking that he had, in fact, become a degenerate fool. On the other hand, he always had Okaru ask those retainers about the size of their clothes, so as to be able to prepare the special garments to wear on the day of the vendetta.

Then it was the thirteenth day of the third month—the day before the first anniversary of the death of his lord, Takumi no kami—but Kuranosuke did not show any concern. He seemed to have forgotten it. He purposely continued to act like an idiot. He went to the pleasure quarter of Fushimi and drank a lot of sake. The following day his son Yoshikane and Okaru urged him to visit the grave of his lord at Zuikōin. He pretended he had forgotten what day it was, and then went to pray for his lord together with Okaru.

The other retainers all thought that even though Kuranosuke had talked at first about a plan to take revenge, he had in fact turned out to be a coward. Thus lamenting, they, too, went to pay their respects at the temple.

ABBR. I will not record the details of how the abbot of Zuikōin, a Zen temple with a sign at the front gate prohibiting the drinking of sake and such, scolded Kuranosuke for bringing a woman with him, and of what he replied. I will also skip recording how he explained to the other retainers that these things were all part of his plan.

ABBR. I will not record the details of how Kuranosuke, returning home from Fushimi, encountered a rough fellow known as Chōzō 長蔵 the Ox, a cowherd, and how he started a quarrel and deliberately got cut across the forehead.⁵³

When people heard that Kuranosuke had gotten a cut across his forehead from Chōzō the Ox, they all thought that he had cast aside the way of the samurai. They even started calling him a bastard son of a bitch.

ABBR. I will not record the details of how Kayano Sanpei committed seppuku because of the conflicting claims of loyalty and filial piety.⁵⁴

⁵² For the identity of Okaru and the way in which she is presented in this account, see the introduction, pp. 458–59.

⁵³ According to Tanabe 1999, (no. 547), p. 3, the story of Chōzō the Ox (Kote no Chōzō くての長蔵) appears in a later *kōdan* 講談 version, where he is described as a horse groom (*umakata* 馬方) rather than a cowherd. A similar story later grew up around the legendary character of the Satsuma swordsman Murakami Kiken 村上喜剣, who is said to have kicked Kuranosuke in the street and cursed him for his dissipation, and who, upon learning of the success of revenge, committed suicide at Ōishi's grave; see Fukumoto 1914, pp. 893–94, for the origins of the legend, which became widespread in the nineteenth century and appeared as the story of the “Satsuma man” in A. B. Mitford's account of the Akō revenge (Mitford 1871, pp. 35–36).

⁵⁴ Kayano, mentioned earlier as one of the first two messengers to carry the news of Asano's

In the meantime, Kōzuke no suke was beginning to loosen his guard.

Kuranosuke ordered the dress to be used on the day of the vendetta from a man named Kikuya Yahyōe 菊屋弥兵へ.⁵⁵ He chose black haori of high-quality woolen cloth, with stomach bands and coats of mail underneath. The gauntlets and leggings were also mailed. The helmets had an extra layer of metal inside the crown. He also arranged that each person should carry fifteen ryō at the time of the vendetta. (This was to indicate that they were not poor.) This was all part of Kuranosuke's plan: in this way, should they fail in their revenge and be killed in Kōzuke no suke's mansion, people would not think that, having lost their stipends, they had broken into his house as burglars.

Kuranosuke was particularly worried about how to arrange for the necessary weapons. Hitting upon a plan, he paid a visit to the Osaka town elder (*sōjukurō* 惣宿老) Amanoya Rihyōe アマノヤ[天野屋]利兵へ.⁵⁶

ABBR. I will not record the details of how Kuranosuke got Rihyōe to pledge his life and to place an order for the armor and weapons under the pretext that they were for use at Osaka castle. Having agreed, once the weapons were ready, Rihyōe marked them as the property of Osaka castle and sent them to Edo. As a result, Rihyōe and his son were arrested and subjected to brutal torture, but they never confessed, and before they had been brought to the point of death, Kuranosuke succeeded in carrying out his mission.

Thereafter Rihyōe and his son were regarded as in fact upright people. Rihyōe's son, changing his name from Sōjirō 惣二郎, adopted the name Amano Rihyōe. He is now said to be at the service of Lord Matsudaira Aki no kami, supplying military provisions, and receiving a stipend of five hundred koku.

Takumi no kami's younger brother Lord Daigaku had continued to be under house arrest. Eventually, the decision was made to put him under the custody [of the main Asano house] in Aki province. Kuranosuke and the others began to gather one by one in Edo to pursue their enemy.

ABBR. I will not record the details of how Takebayashi Tadashichi's 武林ただ[唯]七 father Heizaemon 平左右衛門 and his mother killed themselves in order to encourage their son to act loyally.⁵⁷

attack on Kira to Akō, was a member of the league of revenge whose parents arranged against his wishes for him to enter the service of another daimyo. Caught in a bind of loyalty and filiality, he took his life on 1702.1.14, the memorial day of Asano's death. He would become a model for Hayano Kanpei 早野勘平 in *Kanadehon chūshingura*.

⁵⁵ No other references to this person could be found.

⁵⁶ Regarding Amanoya, see the introduction, pp. 455–56.

⁵⁷ This and various other similar stories of parents of the rōnin committing suicide in order to encourage their sons are all apocryphal, as are those describing the suicide of various parents (almost all mothers) after the seppuku of the rōnin. In the case of Takebayashi, he clearly reported both of his parents as alive on the list of relatives (*shinruigaki* 親類書) that he provided the authorities after being taken into custody.

ABBR. I will not record the details of how more than forty men, beginning with Kuranosuke, met at Jūami ジウアミ⁵⁸ at Maruyama 丸[円]山, in Higashiyama ward.⁵⁹

ABBR. I will not record the details of how Hara Sōemon parted from his son.⁶⁰

ABBR. I will not record the details about how Kuranosuke said farewell to his concubine Okaru and left for Edo, and how Okaru cut her hair, gave it to Kuranosuke, and killed herself.

All the retainers were gathering in Edo one by one. Three or four were still to arrive, but they, too, reached Edo in four days and a half.

ABBR. I will not record the details of how a certain Yatō Chōsuke ヤトウ長助, unable to take part in the revenge because of illness and thinking it dishonorable as a samurai to die of a disease, committed seppuku. He had his son Yatō Emoshichi ヤトウエモ七 take his head to Kuranosuke.⁶¹

It was decided that Kuranosuke should be the commander of the main force, which was to attack the front gate of the mansion, and his son Chikara Yoshikane the commander of the other force, which was to attack the rear gate. The retainers were divided into groups numbered according to the syllabary, with three persons forming the *i* い group, another three the *ro* ろ group, and so forth.⁶²

After reaching Edo, Kuranosuke changed his name to Kakimi Heizaemon カキミ平左衛門. His son Chikara became Kakimi Sanai カキミサナイ.⁶³

They decided to make the attack on the night of the nineteenth day of the twelfth month, the night of *setsubun* セツブン[節分].⁶⁴ But then, they learned that on the

⁵⁸ Jūami 重阿弥 was one of several branches of the Jishū 時宗 school temple of An'yōji 安養寺, which was a large complex in the area east of Yasaka 八坂 shrine, in the hills of Higashiyama. Such places were widely used for parties and meetings.

⁵⁹ The "Maruyama conference" (Maruyama *kaigi* 円山会議), held on 1702.7.28, was attended by nineteen people; it marked a key turning point in the history of the league of revenge, for it was here that Ōishi Kuranosuke finally committed himself wholly to revenge on Kira.

⁶⁰ Hara's son mentioned here must be his heir Jūjirō 重次郎, who was age five at the time of his father's death and took the tonsure to avoid banishment when he reached maturity. After the pardon of the heirs of the rōnin in 1709, Jūjirō left the priesthood and became a retainer of the main Asano house in Hiroshima; see Akō-shi 1987, vol. 1, p. 305.

⁶¹ Yatō Chōsuke Noriteru 矢頭長介 教照 had served Takumi no kami with a stipend of 20 koku. He died not of suicide, but of illness; his date of death is often given as 1702.8.15 (*Akō gishi jiten*, p. 313), but appears as 1702.10.14 in a letter written by his son Emoshichi 右衛門七; see Akō-shi 1987, vol 3, pp. 337-38.

⁶² By the time of this account in 1744, the convention of assigning one kana of the syllabary to each of the forty-seven rōnin was well established; no other example is known, however, of the system described here, where each kana was for a group of three.

⁶³ Kuranosuke had often used the alias Ikeda Kueemon 池田九右衛門 on letters written from Yamashina, but in Edo he took the name Kakimi Gorobei 垣見五郎兵衛, posing as an older relative of his son Chikara, who took the name Kakimi Sanai 垣見左内. For a list of the aliases used by of the Akō rōnin, see Akō-shi 1987, vol. 1, p. 154.

⁶⁴ The night before the calendrical beginning of spring.

fourteenth, Lord Kira Kōzuke no suke, who was a devotee of the tea ceremony, was planning a tea ceremony to which he had invited Lord Ōtomo Ōmi no kami 大友近江守. [Ōtaka] Gengo [大高] 源五, who had become a pupil of the tea master Yamada Sōhen ヤマダサウヘン, had heard this.⁶⁵ He also managed to inquire casually about the details of Lord Kōzuke no suke's mansion, and reported this information to Kuranosuke. They thus decided to make the attack on the fourteenth rather than the nineteenth. Fortuitously, the fourteenth was also the day of Lord Takumi no kami's death. The loyal samurai waited impatiently for the fourteenth to come.⁶⁶

The retainers all sent messengers to their hometown to convey their farewells in this life to their families.

ABBR. I will not record the details of how, from the time of Kuranosuke's arrival in Edo until the day of the vendetta, retainers had taken turns every night spying on Kōzuke no suke's mansion in various disguises. From midnight of the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, it was Kanzaki Yōgorō Noriyasu's turn. He was disguised as a peddler of *dengaku* snacks.⁶⁷ With the approach of dawn, he was about to leave, but when he went to the rear gate of Lord Kōzuke no suke's mansion, he saw Kuranosuke, dressed like a beggar and wrapped in a rush mat. (It had been snowing since the day before.) Emerging from the snow, Kuranosuke accompanied Yōgorō home. His son Yoshikane had been watching at the front gate in the same fashion.

Prior to this, on the day of the thirteenth, the retainers had all gone to Kuranosuke's place. (He was staying at Koku-chō コク丁[石町]) Father and son were wrapped in quilts and sitting close to the brazier. The others had criticized them, saying that this was not the way that one planning to die the next day should behave. But now, Kanzaki Yōgorō discovered them in the snow and, shocked, was moved to tears. Kuranosuke told him that he and his son had spent all the previous nights in the same way, watching Kira's mansion. They were truly great men, rare to encounter nowadays.

On the very eve of the attack, Okuno Shōgen and Shindō Genshirō had a change of heart and did not join the others.⁶⁸ At the beginning, when there was talk of making a stand at the castle, both had gathered at the castle with their armor, but later they had a change of heart. The number of the men was thus forty-seven,

⁶⁵ The story of Ōtaka Gengo and Yamada Sōhen 山田宗偏 is well documented in the primary materials; see the account in *Akō-shi* 1987, vol. 1, pp. 183–86.

⁶⁶ According to the historical consensus about the sequence of events, the date for the attack was originally set not for the nineteenth, but for the sixth day of the twelve month, when a tea gathering was scheduled to be held at Kira's residence. The gathering was canceled, however, and the rōnin therefore had to reschedule the attack for the fourteenth.

⁶⁷ Norinaga has *rengaku* レンガク, a variant pronunciation of *dengaku* 田楽, pieces of taro potato or tofu toasted with a sweet miso topping.

⁶⁸ It appears that Okuno Shōgen and Shindō Genshirō (see above, pp. 472 and 480) had in fact both left the league by the eighth month of 1702, and therefore never reached Edo.

but because Kayano Sanpei Shigetsugu had earlier followed his lord in death, it appears that forty-six men took part in the attack on Kōzuke no suke's mansion.⁶⁹

The morning of the fourteenth, all the retainers went to Sengakuji to pay homage at the tomb of their lord.⁷⁰ They had all gathered to offer their respects, but Yokogawa Kanpei had not yet arrived. Kanpei, in fact, on his way to Sengakuji had stopped to call on a priest with whom he was friendly named Gachō 臥朝, who lived in Hayashi-chō ハヤシ[林]町, in Honjo 本所. Kanpei had a small debt to him, and stopped to see him in regard to that, but just then a servant arrived with a message from Lord Kōzuke no suke for Gachō. As Gachō was a practitioner of the tea ceremony, Lord Kōzuke no suke wanted to invite him to attend the tea gathering arranged for that evening in honor of Lord Ōtomo Ōmi no kami. Since Yokogawa Kanpei happened to be there when the messenger arrived, he wrote a reply in Gachō's place and (so as to be able to check on the situation there) went to Lord Kōzuke no suke's mansion as Gachō's messenger.⁷¹ He thus was able to inspect the mansion from top to bottom. When he joined the others at Sengakuji and told them what happened, Kuranosuke and the others were delighted. What Kanpei observed was just as Gengo had heard previously. They thus had a good overall picture of the layout of Kōzuke no suke's residence.

Kuranosuke then explained the procedures to be followed, from the assault on the mansion to Kōzuke no suke's beheading, and what to do thereafter. He wrote out all the points on a piece of paper and had the retainers seal it in blood. (I will abbreviate here the details.) The general points were as follows.

First, they were to wear haori of black wool lined in dark red with two white stripes on the front as an insignia. Their helmets were to be reinforced with a second, inner crown. Each was to carry fifteen ryō together with a signed piece of paper stating that the money should be given to those who disposed of the corpse. A letter of the syllabary, indicating the group to which each belonged, was written on the silver ornament on their helmets. The three-man groups were to assist each other, but not to pay attention to the rest. So as to look as if they were inspectors charged with looking out for fire, they should carry ladders, big hammers, and buckets, but they should sneak into the mansion quietly, without

⁶⁹ Kayano's proper name was Shigezane 重実, not Shigetsugu. Note that the totals here do not include Terasaka Kichiemon 寺坂吉右衛門, who historically took part in the attack but left shortly after and was not among the forty-six taken into custody; for more on Terasaka, see Smith forthcoming.

⁷⁰ No primary evidence exists for a visit of the rōnin to Sengakuji the morning before the attack on Kira, and such an act would have surely been risky, but since the fourteenth was the memorial day of Asano's death, the story had a natural appeal and appeared in various of the early chronicles, such as *Akō gijin roku* (p. 294) and *Sekijō gishinden* (p. 294).

⁷¹ This story, for which there is no corroboration in the primary sources, appears as a note added to the later (ca. 1709) version of *Ako gijin roku* (p. 294). In that account, the person Yokogawa Kanpei visits is an anonymous, illiterate rōnin and the date is unspecified. *Sekijō gishinden* repeats the story, but gives the date as the tenth and makes the rōnin an anonymous recluse (桑門 *sōmon*; pp. 288–89). The episode does not appear in *Akō seigi*, which features a completely different story about Yokogawa, and may have later disappeared from the oral tradition.

letting anyone know they were there. Once they succeeded in taking Lord Kōzuke's head, they should blow on the whistle that each was to carry. As soon as they heard the whistle all should assemble.

They should not concern themselves with anyone but Kira. They should avoid meaningless killing, and not bother women and children, but should finish off anyone who attacked them. In striking down Kōzuke no suke, even if it was not done cleanly and they had to tear it off, they should take his head at all costs. They should not damage the walls or act rowdily and should not touch any weapons or armaments. They should, however, check into anything suspicious. There also was a possibility that shogunal officers would come to investigate the situation while the fighting was still going on. Should that happen, one person should go out to meet the officers, and, even if Kōzuke no suke had not yet been captured, tell them that the retainers had already killed him, but that as they were still scattered in different parts of the mansion, they would let the officers in as soon as they had assembled in one place. The merit of those who stood on guard outside the mansion was to be the same as those who grappled with Lord Kōzuke.

After everything was set, they returned to their lodgings. When night fell, the group that was to attack the front of the mansion under Kuranosuke assembled and dressed themselves at Horibe Yahyōe's place. The group that was to attack the rear gate, led by Chikara, assembled and dressed themselves at Maibara [Maebara] Isuke's マイバラエスケ[前原伊助] place. Horibe Yahyōe's nephew was sent ahead to keep watch at the mansion and to see when Lord Ōtomo Ōmi no kami left it. As soon as Lord Ōtomo left, he hurried back to inform the others. All started marching toward the mansion. Kuranosuke's group of twenty-four men climbed over the wall from the front of the mansion. Chikara's group of twenty-three men entered from the rear and surrounded the mansion. Kuranosuke's group flung open the door of the entrance hall and stealthily headed for the bedrooms. First, however, they cut the strings of the bows that were lined up near the entrance and hid the spears and rifles. Kuranosuke stuck a piece of paper into a tatami at the entrance; on it he wrote that they were foregoing the normal niceties and breaking into the mansion because of the irresistible demands of the way of lord and vassal. They moved steadily toward the inner rooms, paying no heed to the sleeping men they encountered, but a boy sleeping there started awake. Threatening that he was a dead man if he raised his voice, they tied him up and pushed him to the side, but he managed to twist free and escape. Wakened by the alarm he raised, other samurai came out to fight the retainers.

ABBR. I will not record the details of how the fight intensified.

Looking towards the wall of the neighboring mansion, they saw a large number of lanterns raised high. "This is Tsuchiya Chikara 土屋チカラ,"⁷² a voice declared.

⁷² Tsuchiya Chikara 土屋主税 (1660–1730) was a hatamoto whose residence was located on the north side of Kira's mansion.

“If robbers have broken into your house we will help you fight them.” Horibe Yahyōe came out. “We are Takumi no kami’s retainers,” he replied. “We are here to avenge our lord.” The lanterns were all withdrawn; instead the people on the other side threw a large number of oranges over the wall so that the retainers could relieve their thirst.

The retainers ran here and there, but they could not find any room that seemed to be Kira’s bedroom. Then they saw two or three warriors guarding a room. Convinced that this was Kōzuke no suke’s bedroom, they all rushed inside. They did not meet any strong resistance and easily entered. “Now that things have come to this point,” they cried, “come out without protesting and let us take your head!” But there was no answer.

They broke the paper doors and entered the room, but nobody was there. The quilts, when they felt them, were still warm, a sure sign that Kōzuke no suke could not have gotten very far. They searched everywhere for him, but could not find him. As they had not yet searched inside the coffer and chests of drawers, they began to check these, too. But of Lord Kōzuke there was no trace. Next they lifted up the tatami and thrust their swords into the cracks between the boards underneath. People hiding under the veranda tried to run away, but the retainers caught them and tied them up. Soon they ran out of rope, so they opened the front gate and, after checking them one by one, released the people they had caught. Still they could not find Lord Kōzuke.

While the others went outside to look, Kuranosuke remained in the great hall. Seeing him all alone, three notable warriors, experts with the spear and sword, clambered up the pillars and attacked him from above. (They were Kobayashi Heihachi 小林平八,⁷³ a famous spearman, and the noted swordsmen Shudō Yoichiemon 首藤与一右衛門 and Suzuki Motoemon 鈴木元右衛門.) Being one against three, Kuranosuke was put in a tight spot, but he managed to fight back and killed them all.

The eastern sky was beginning to lighten, but of Kōzuke no suke there was still no trace. The retainers gathered at the great hall. “Dawn is about to break and the shogun’s guards could arrive any minute,” they said to each other. “It would be better to commit seppuku here, rather than risk the dishonor of being caught and bound and having our heads lopped off. What an unfortunate fate!” But Kuranosuke stopped them: “Hold on!” he said. “Don’t give up! There may be a secret cellar in the ground. See if you can’t find something that looks like a cellar.” The retainers began to poke the ground. “Last year,” Kanzaki Yogorō said, “they collected a lot of one-inch thick zelkova boards. Working as a day laborer, I helped carry those boards here, and I thought at the time that something was strange. For sure they must have used them to cover a secret cellar in the ground.”

⁷³ Kobayashi was a retainer of the Uesugi 上杉 house, which was closely related to Kira. His skills as a spearman are reported also in *Kōseki kenmonki* 江赤見聞記, and he would become a fixture of later *kōdan*.

They noticed a teahouse where the earthen floor was mounded up. The secret cellar must be under the teahouse, they thought. Pulling up the tatami and flooring, they caught sight of a light, but the moment they removed the boards it went out.

“He’s here!” Kuranosuke thought. “Sire,” he declared politely, “we are here to take your head.”

Again there was no answer. With lanterns in hand they went down into the cellar. They found a secret passage and followed it. Meanwhile, Horibe Yahyōe Kanamaru was crouching near an artificial mound in the garden topped by a small Inari shrine, in order to block that possible escape route. Suddenly a man emerged from the ground at the foot of the Inari shrine. His hair was pulled back in the style of one in retirement, and he wore a yellow kimono with wide sleeves and a womanly sash. (It was Lord Kōzuke.)⁷⁴

“It’s him!” Yahyōe thought and grabbed him. He started to whistle to the others, but another man appeared and seized him from behind, helping Lord Kōzuke to escape. Yahyōe was almost done in, but Takebayashi Tadashichi came to his aid, killed the man who was holding him, and helped him capture Lord Kōzuke. They dragged Lord Kōzuke to the great hall.

Kuranosuke asked who had captured him. Yahyōe was the first to catch him and then Takebayashi Tadashichi, was the reply. Kuranosuke faced Lord Kōzuke and bowed with his hands on the floor. “With all due respect I must tell you that, unable otherwise to uphold the way of lord and vassal, we have come to take your head. I ask you to commit seppuku without further ado.” Lord Kōzuke, however, did not reply. He tried to escape, but found himself surrounded on all sides. The retainers were ready to strike him down at any moment. With nothing else to do, he began to make excuses. “It was Lord Takumi no kami who tried to kill me (without paying any heed to the place where we were). I ignored him and ran away. You can see here where he struck me. (For his act he was ordered to commit seppuku.) There are no grounds for you to kill me, saying that it is to avenge your lord!”

At that Kuranosuke gave a signal, and Takebayashi Tadashichi struck off Kira’s head. Then all the others, beginning with Kuranosuke, struck the corpse in turn, saying “Take this as vengeance for our lord!” The corpse was reduced to shreds. Yoshida Chūzaemon 吉田テウ[忠]左衛門 and Tomimori Suke-dayū トミモリスケダユウ⁷⁵ took the head and, keeping out of sight, boarded a small boat at Ryōgoku 両国 for Sengakuji. The others took a false head (this was so it would

⁷⁴ For the unique nature of this intriguing account of the way in which Kira was found, see the introduction, p. 459.

⁷⁵ The same person is named below as Tomimori Sukeemon 富森助右衛門. As noted in the introduction (p. 457), the identification of these two retainers as those charged with carrying the true head to Sengakuji is at odds with the reference to them in the following paragraph as being assigned to report to the bakufu authorities the successful completion of the vendetta; it is also at odds with other manuscript chronicles and *jitsuroku* accounts. Presumably it results from confusion on the part of either Jitsudō or Norinaga.

not matter even if it were confiscated).⁷⁶ Having made sure that there was no danger of fire breaking out in the mansion, they left by the rear gate. Eighteen of the enemy were killed and more than ten wounded.⁷⁷ On the retainers' side, two were wounded, but only lightly.

As they left from the rear gate, Tsuchiya Chikara again came out. "Allow me to congratulate you on achieving your aim," he said. "What a splendid accomplishment!" Yoshida Chūzaemon and Tomimori Sukeemon were sent to Lord Sengoku Hōki no kami セングクハウキ守 to say that the retainers had no intention to escape and were heading to Sengakuji, where they would wait for the government's judgment.⁷⁸ On their way to Sengakuji, they knocked at the gate of Ekōin エカウ[回向]院 temple, but were not allowed to enter. They thus stopped at the inn of Sakaya Jūhyōe 酒屋十兵へ to have a drink before continuing on to Sengakuji. When they passed in front of the gate of the mansion of Lord Wakizaka Awaji no kami, they were stopped and asked who they were. They did not hide who they were, and told what had happened, and the gatekeeper allowed them to pass on.⁷⁹ They were questioned again when they arrived at the mansion of Lord Matsudaira Mutsu no kami 松平ムツ[陸奥]守.⁸⁰ They explained the situation, but the gatekeepers would not let them pass and told them to wait. When they appealed to Lord Mutsu no kami, he invited all of them to enter the mansion. "Although I cannot approve of such actions, you have shown yourselves to be true samurai," he said, and he offered them a cup of sake. They passed the cup of sake among their ranks and returned it to Kuranosuke. Saying that he would take it as a memento to put on Lord Takumi no kami's grave, Kuranosuke was about to put it in his bosom.

"Leave it with me," Lord Mutsu no kami said. "That would be too much of an honor," Kuranosuke replied. "Then give it instead to my son, Tsunamura ツナムラ,"⁸¹ the lord said. Kuranosuke thus offered the cup to the young lord, and the retainers proceeded to Sengakuji, escorted by a large force of Lord Mutsu no kami's men.

It is said that the gatekeepers of Lord Mutsu no kami's mansion, who stopped the retainers, were rewarded by being elevated to the status of samurai with a stipend of five hundred koku. The gatekeepers of Lord Awaji no kami's mansion,

⁷⁶ For variant stories about the disposition of Kira's head(s), and the different routes taken, see the introduction, pp. 456–57.

⁷⁷ The bakufu inspectors who investigated the Kira mansion reported sixteen dead (other than Kira himself); see Noguchi 1994, pp. 172–74.

⁷⁸ Sengoku Hisanao 仙石久尚 (1655–1735) was a hatamoto (1,500 koku) and one of the two chief inspectors (*ōmetsuke* 大目付) of the bakufu at the time.

⁷⁹ Wakizaka was one of the daimyo charged with overseeing the surrender of Akō castle. See above, p. 474.

⁸⁰ Date Tsunamura 伊達綱村 (1659–1719), daimyo of Sendai 仙台 domain.

⁸¹ There is some confusion here, as Tsunamura was the daimyo (although he retired in 1703 at the age of forty-five), not his son, "the young lord" (*wakadono* 若殿).

on the other hand, were stripped of the status of samurai (*ahōbarai* 阿房払い) for not having stopped the retainers.⁸²

After gathering at Sengakuji, they all proceeded to the grave of their lord. The priests of the temple locked the front gate, in case a force should come in pursuit of the retainers. The men sent as an escort by Lord Mutsu no kami stood guard in front of the gate so as to prevent the retainers from escaping.

Kuranosuke placed the head of Lord Kōzuke no suke in front of his lord's grave. He then offered up the dagger he had received from Lord Takumi no kami. "Today we have brought Kōzuke no suke here," he declared. "My Lord, strike him as you please!"

The retainers all burnt incense and wept with joy.

The vendetta took place on the fourteenth day of the twelfth month of the fifteenth year of Genroku.

The head of Lord Kōzuke no suke was handed over to the priests of Sengakuji. When the family temple of Kōzuke no suke came to ask for it, the abbot said that he could not hand it over on his own authority. He thus consulted Lord Abe Hida no kami 阿部飛弾[驩]守,⁸³ who ordered that the head should be returned to Kira's family temple. On the nineteenth day of the twelfth month, at eleven o'clock, the head was transferred to Kira's family temple and buried together with his body.

The abbot of Sengakuji, after telling Kuranosuke, informed Lord Abe Hida no kami about the retainers of Lord Takumi no kami. Lord Abe Hida no kami summoned the forty-seven men. They came dressed in the same clothes as they had worn on the day of the attack. At the entrance, they handed over their swords. The inspectors Mizuno Kozaemon 水野小左衛門 and Suzuki Gen'emon 鈴木源右衛門⁸⁴ queried the retainers, and Kuranosuke explained the situation. The inspectors then told the retainers that orders would be handed down later about further interrogation of each of them. For the time being, in accordance with the law of the realm, they were to be allowed to keep their swords and were to be taken into custody. They were thereby entrusted to the custody of different daimyo.

The circumstances of custody:

Lord Hosokawa Etchū no kami 細川越中守⁸⁵ had custody of the following seventeen samurai:

⁸² *Ahōbarai* was a form of banishment in which a samurai was stripped of his swords.

⁸³ Abe Hida no kami Masataka 阿部飛驒守正喬 (1669–1714) was at the time prefect of temples and shrines (*jisha bugyō* 寺社奉行).

⁸⁴ Mizuno Kozaemon (1664–1778) and Suzuki Gengoemon 源五右衛門 (not Gen'emon; 1660–1743) were the bakufu inspectors sent to meet the Akō rōnin at Sengakuji after the attack on Kira.

⁸⁵ Hosokawa Tsunatoshi 細川綱利 (1643–1714) was daimyo of Kumamoto 熊本 (present-day Kumamoto prefecture), 540,000 koku.

1. Ōishi Kuranosuke 大石内蔵之介[助],⁸⁶ chief councilor (*karō* 家老): 1,500 koku; age 45.
2. Hara Sōemon Mototoki 原惣右衛門モト、キ[元辰], foot soldier commander (*ashigarugashira* 足輕頭): 300 koku; age 55.
3. Kataoka Gengoemon 片岡源五右衛門, chief steward (*sobayōnin* 側用人): 350 koku; age 36.
4. Mase Kyūdayū 間瀬久大[太]夫, chief inspector (*ōmetsuke* 大目付): 300 koku; age 63.
5. Onodera Jūnai 小野寺重[十]内, Kyoto representative (*Kyō rusui* 京留主[守]居): 150 koku; age 60.
6. Yoshida Chūzaemon 吉田忠左衛門, county magistrate (*gundai* 郡代): 200 koku; age 63.
7. Isogai Jūrōzaemon 磯貝十郎左衛門, steward (*yōnin* 用人): 150 koku; age 24.
8. Horibe Yahei Kanamaru 堀部弥兵衛金丸, Edo representative, retired (*Edo rusu[i]* *inkyō* 江戸留主[守居]隱居): 150 koku; age 76.
9. Tomimori Sukeemon 富森助右衛門, horseman (*umamawari* 馬廻り): 200 koku; age 33.
10. Chikamatsu Kanroku 近松勘六, horseman: 250 koku; age 33.
11. Ushioda Matanojō 潮田又之丞, horseman: 200 koku; age 33.
12. Akagaki Genzō 赤垣源蔵,⁸⁷ idem: 200 koku; age 31.
13. Okuda Magodayū 奥田孫大[太]夫, idem: 150 koku; age 56.
14. Yada Gorōemon 矢田五郎右衛門, idem: 200 koku; age 29.
15. Ōishi Sezaemon 大石瀬左衛門, idem: 150 koku; age 27.
16. Hayami Tōzaemon 早水藤左衛門, idem: 150 koku; age 29.
17. Hazama Jūbyōe 間重兵衛,⁸⁸ idem: 150 koku; age 56.

Lord Matsudaira Oki no kami 松平隠岐守⁸⁹ had the custody of the following ten samurai:

1. Ōishi Chikara Yoshikane 大石主税ヨシカネ[良金], heir (*heyazumi* 部屋住); age 16.
2. Horibe Yasubyōe 堀部安兵衛: 200 koku; age 33.
3. Nakamura Kansuke 中村勘介[助], registrar (*shoyaku* 書役): 100 koku; age 47.
4. Kimura Okaemon 木村岡右衛門, horseman: 150 koku; age 45.
5. Sugaya Hanojō 菅谷半之丞, spearman (*yari* 鎧): 100 koku; age 44.
6. Fuwa Kazuemon 生波[不破]数右衛門, construction magistrate (*fushin bugyō* 普請奉行): 100 koku; age 33.
7. Ōtaka Gengo 大高源五,⁹⁰ attendant (*kinju* 近習): 50 koku; age 31.

⁸⁶ Norinaga inserted the additional names “Fujiwara no Yoshio 藤原ヨシヲ,” a reference to Kuranosuke’s (supposed) lineage name Fujiwara and his given name Yoshio 良雄.

⁸⁷ Norinaga mistook Akabane 赤埴 for “Akagaki,” an error that was widespread and later became fixed in *kōdan* storytelling.

⁸⁸ Hazama’s name was Kihyōe 喜兵衛; the characters 喜 and 重 have been confused.

⁸⁹ Matsudaira (Hisamatsu 久松 branch) Sadanao 定直 (1660–1720) was daimyo of Matsuyama 松山 (present-day Ehime prefecture), 150,000 koku.

⁹⁰ Norinaga inserted the reading “Takao” タカヲ next to Gengo, probably an (erroneous) reference to Ōtaka’s given name, Tadao 忠雄.

8. Kaiga Yazaemon 貝賀弥左衛門: 10 ryō, 3 *nin-fuchi*; age 56.
9. Chidori Saburobei 千鳥[馬]三郎兵衛:⁹¹ horseman: 100 koku; age 53.
10. Okano Kin'emon 岡野金右衛門: 200 koku; age 23.

Lord Mōri Kai no kami 毛利甲斐守⁹² had the custody of the following ten samurai:

1. Onodera Kōemon 小野寺幸右衛門 (younger brother of [Ōtaka] Gengo): 5 *nin-fuchi*; age 27.
2. Kurahashi Densuke 倉橋伝助, attendant: 1 *nin-fuchi*, 20 koku; age 33.
3. Okajima Yasoemon 岡嶋弥惣[八十]右衛門: 20 koku, 5 *nin-fuchi*; age 37.
4. Yoshida Sawaemon 吉田沢右衛門, heir of Chūzaemon:⁹³ age 28.
5. Muramatsu Kihyōe 村松喜兵衛, magistrate of stipends (*fuchikata bugyō* 扶持方奉行): 25 koku, 5 *nin-fuchi*; age 61.
6. Kataoka Shinroku 片岡新六:⁹⁴ age 28.
7. Takebayashi Tadashichi 武林唯七, attendant: 10 ryō, 3 *nin-fuchi*; age 31.
8. Sugino Jūheiji 杉野十平次, attendant: 8 ryō, 3 *nin-fuchi*; age 27.
9. Maebara Isuke 前原伊介[助], magistrate of money (*kane bugyō*): 10 ryō, 3 *nin-fuchi*; age 39.
10. Katsuda Shin'emon 勝田新右衛門, keeper of the seals (*fuda yokome* 札横目): 10 ryō, 3 *nin-fuchi*; age 23.

Lord Mizuno Kenmotsu 水野監物⁹⁵ had custody of the following eight samurai:⁹⁶

1. Mase Magokurō 間瀬孫九郎, son of Kyūdayū: age 23.
2. Yatō Emoshichi 矢頭右衛門七, son of Chōsuke 長助: age 17.
3. Okuda Sadaemon 奥田定[貞]右衛門, son of Magodayū: age 25.
4. Kayano Wasuke 菅の[茅野]和介[助]: 7 ryō, 3 *nin-fuchi*, age 37.
5. Muramatsu Sandayū 村松三大[太]夫, son of Kihyōe: age 27.
6. Hazama Jūjirō 間十次郎, son of Jūbyōe: age 26.
7. Tomibayashi Sukenoshin 富林助之進:⁹⁷ 7 ryō, 4 *nin-fuchi*; age 37.
8. Kanzaki Yogorō Noriyasu 神崎与五郎[則休]: 7 ryō, 4 *nin-fuchi*; age 38.

⁹¹ Norinaga mistook Chiba 千馬 (read Senba by some) for Chidori, a confusion of the characters 馬 and 鳥.

⁹² Mōri Tsunamoto 毛利綱元 (1650–1709) was daimyo of Chōfu 長府 (present-day Yamaguchi prefecture), 50,000 koku.

⁹³ Chūzaemon is miswritten “Chūemon 忠右衛門.” Chūzaemon was in the first group, in the custody of the Hosokawa.

⁹⁴ This must be Hazama 間 Shinroku, the son of Kihyōe (Jūbyōe; number 17 of the first group) and younger brother of Jūjirō (in the fourth group, in the custody of the Mizuno).

⁹⁵ Mizuno Tadayuki 水野忠之 (1669–1731) was daimyo of Okazaki 岡崎 (present-day Aichi prefecture), 50,000 koku.

⁹⁶ There were in fact nine of the Akō rōnin in custody at the Mizuno mansion; see the following note.

⁹⁷ This name is perplexing, since it does not correspond to any known Akō retainer (although it seems closest to Tomimori Sukeemon, who appears above in the leadership group), and bears no resemblance to either of the two names that are missing here from the Mizuno group, Yokogawa Kanpei and Mimura Jirōzaemon 三村次郎左衛門. The stipend (7 ryō, 4 *nin-fuchi*) and age of 37, as well as the place on the list, would seem to correspond better to Yokogawa (6 ryō, 3 *nin-fuchi*, age 37) than to Mimura (also age 37, with a stipend of 6 koku in *kirimai* 切米, and 2 *nin-fuchi*).

Palanquins came from the houses of custody to receive the forty-six.⁹⁸ When Lord Inaba Hōki no kami 稲葉伯耆守⁹⁹ was asked how they should be treated, he said that since the men were not charged with serious crimes, the lords should treat them as they saw fit, and offer them proper meals (*nijūgosai* 二汁五菜) in the morning and the evening. All forty-six samurai were ordered to submit lists of their relatives for official inspection, to be turned over to the bakufu by the houses of custody. Those who had been part of the conspiracy but who defected were:¹⁰⁰ Nakamura Toshinosuke 中村利介 [Nakata Riheiiji 中田理平次], Yano Isuke 矢野伊介, Nakamura Seiemon 中村清右衛門, Seno Mago[za]emon 瀬尾孫右[左]衛門, Suzuki Jūhachirō 鈴木重八郎 [Suzuta Jūhachi 鈴木重八], Oyamada Shō[za]emon 小山田庄右[左]衛門, Tanaka Sadashirō 田中定[貞]四郎, and Mōri Koheiji [Koheita] 毛利小平次 [小平太].

⁹⁸ The preceding list contains only forty-five names, because of the omission of one from the final group.

⁹⁹ This must refer to Inaba Masayuki 稲葉正住 (1640–1715), daimyo of Sakura 佐倉 (present-day Chiba prefecture). He was the bakufu senior councilor (*rōjū* 老中) in charge at the time of the attack on Kira. His title, however, was Tango no kami 丹後守, not Hōki no kami.

¹⁰⁰ Corrections of the numerous errors in this list are shown in brackets.

The Story of the Loyal Samurai of Akō

MOTOORI NORINAGA

Translated by
FEDERICO MARCON

I have abbreviated a great deal, and am not recording everything.¹
I am writing down, just as my foolish ears heard it, the story told by the priest Jitsudō 実道 during a series of sermons at Jukyōji 樹敬寺 temple from the ninth month of Enkyō 延享 1 [1744], about how the retainers of Asano Takumi no kami Naganori 浅野内匠頭長[矩], lord of Ako castle in the province of Harima,²

THE TRANSLATOR is a Ph.D. candidate in Japanese history at Columbia University. He would like to thank Akiko Takeuchi of Columbia University for her assistance with the translation and Henry D. Smith II for guidance with the annotation.

The translation is based on the printed version of the original text included in MNZ 20, pp. 585–600. In an effort to convey the features of the original, presently known by the title *Akō gishi den* 赤穂義士伝, the editors of the printed version have noted interlinear interpolations, excisions, and corrections made by Norinaga. Here I have used parentheses to indicate interpolations. Where excisions and corrections are significant enough to affect the meaning, I have put them as well in parentheses and added a footnote. As mentioned in the introduction by Henry D. Smith and myself to this translation, Norinaga's text contains many irregularities and inconsistencies in orthography and the transcriptions of names. At the first occurrence of a proper name, I have given the orthography used there but I have not attempted to indicate later variations. In a few instances of irregularities in kanji usage, the standard kanji have been given in brackets. As Norinaga renders many names largely in kana, in such cases I have provided the kanji version in brackets or a footnote.

Norinaga demarcates sections of the narrative by double and single circles (for an example of the former, see the photograph of the opening lines in figure 1 of the introduction, p. xxx). I have tried to convey this segmentation through the addition of space between paragraphs, but have not distinguished between the two types of circle.

Full names, dates, and other details about the individual forty-seven rōnin themselves have been omitted here; these may be found in Akō-shi 1987, vol. 3, pp. 746–47. The bibliographic information for works cited here may be found in the list of references appended to the preceding article.

¹ As can be seen in the photograph of the opening lines (figure 1 of the introduction, pp. 442–43), these opening provisos appear set off on a separate line.

² As mentioned in the introduction, the name of the domain, located in the southwestern part of present-day Hyōgo prefecture, is today usually pronounced Akō. Norinaga, however, consistently renders it as Ako, and in the translation I have adhered to his reading.

took revenge on the enemy of their master under the leadership of Ōishi Kuranosuke Fujiwara no Yoshio 大いしからの介藤原のよしを.³ Since there are things I forgot to ask, however, circumstances of the events are sometimes not clear. There are also parts that I omitted, and places where I forgot, but I went ahead and wrote it down. There are said to be some twenty different accounts that record these events. The one related [by Jitsudō] is said to be based on a book of Ōishi's letters.

It all started the third month of the fourteenth year of Genroku 元禄 [禄; 1701], when Asano Takumi no kami Naganori, lord of Ako castle in the province of Harima, was appointed⁴ to the duty of hosting the imperial envoys (the former grand councilors Yanagihara 柳原 and Takano 高野)⁵ coming to Edo from the capital. Since Lord Kira Kōzuke no suke Yoshihide きら上野佐よしひで⁶ was well informed about such matters, all of those appointed to these duties were supposed to ask him about the proper procedures. Lord Takumi no kami thus also consulted him about what to do. Some among his retainers suggested to Takumi no kami that it would be appropriate to offer a present to Lord Kōzuke no suke when asking his advice, but Lord Takumi no kami said that, no, to do so would in fact be disrespectful to the one being consulted. To offer a gift at the first meeting was not proper. It would be more suitable to send a present later, after the consultation. He thus did not send a gift to Kōzuke no suke. But Kōzuke no suke was a greedy person, and he did not instruct Takumi no kami correctly and caused him repeated humiliation.

Prior to this, one night Lord Katō Tōtōmi no kami 加藤遠江守⁷ had paid a visit to Lord Takumi no kami's mansion. He had told Takumi no kami directly that it was customary for everybody appointed to such duties to ask Lord Kōzuke no suke for advice. He then had added that he wished to warn Takumi no kami about something. Handing over his two swords, he said, "Kōzuke no suke is a greedy person. If he does not receive a substantial gift, he acts offensively. In such a case, don't make the mistake of getting angry! I, too, have been insulted by him. I was tempted to strike him, but trying to stay calm and keeping in mind that it

³ 大石内蔵助藤原良雄.

⁴ The words "were appointed" are accompanied by a katakana interpolation, "this is known as the *kyōō no ichibokushi*"; *kyōō* is clearly 饗応 (reception), but the meaning of *ichibokushi* is unclear.

⁵ Yanagihara Saki no gondainagon Sukekado 柳原前大納言資廉 (1644–1712) and Takano Saki no chūnagon Yasuharu 高野前中納言保春 (1650–1712), envoys to Edo of Emperor Higashiyama 東山 (1675–1709; r. 1687–1709).

⁶ Kira's given name was Yoshinaka 義央 (also read Yoshihisa); the error of writing it as 義英 (Yoshihide) began as early as Muro Kyūsō's 室鳩巢 *Akō gijin roku* 赤穂義人録 of 1703 (see p. 274), and was widespread in the early chronicles of the Akō incident.

⁷ Earlier sources reported this to be Katō Tōtōmi no kami Yasuzane 泰実; see *Akō gijin roku*, p. 276; and *Sekijō gishinden*, pp. 5–7. But as a note to *Akō gijin roku* in NST 27 points out, Yasuzane must be an error for Yasutsune 泰恒 (1657–1715), daimyo of Ōzu 大洲 domain (in present-day Ehime prefecture) from 1675 until his death. Yasuzane was a monk and the younger brother of Yasutsune. The whole story is probably apocryphal.

was an important occasion, restrained myself. However he insults you and however much you feel you can no longer bear it, you, too, should keep your wits and bear with it.” Having said this, he took back his swords and left.

The day before the imperial envoys were to arrive at Zōjōji 僧[増]上寺,⁸ Takumi no kami asked Kōzuke no suke, “Is there an established form for readying the lodging for the imperial envoys?”

“No,” Kōzuke no suke replied, “There is no particular form. Just leave everything as it is.”

But Takumi no kami later heard from Lord Date Ukyō no suke 伊達右京佐,⁹ who had been appointed to the same duty, that Kōzuke no suke had ordered that the walls should be replastered and the tatami mats changed. Lord Takumi no kami was greatly surprised and angered. He had to replaster the walls and change more than three hundred tatami in just one night. Such humiliations were repeatedly inflicted upon him.

For the ceremony of the shogun’s reply to the emperor, Takumi no kami once again asked Kōzuke no suke for advice: “For the ceremony of the reply, should I go to the castle dressed in *kamishimo* 上下[袴], or in *shōzoku* 装束?”¹⁰

“You will be going together with Lord Ukyō,” Kōzuke no suke replied. “Do the same as he does.”

When Lord Ukyō came to get him, Takumi no kami saw that he was wearing the usual *kamishimo*. Takumi no kami therefore also wore the same dress to the castle. Once there, however, Lord Ukyō changed his clothes and put on *shōzoku*. Takumi no kami was astonished. How was it, he thought, that Kōzuke no suke should bear him such a grudge as to insult him like this. How detestable! How mortifying! Why, he wondered bitterly, had Kōzuke no suke not told him to bring *shōzoku* to change into at the castle. He hurried back to the main gate, where his retainers were waiting for him, and ordered them to go back to his residence to get his *shōzoku*, so that he could change his dress for the ceremony.

Then, just when the imperial envoys were about to arrive, Lord Takumi no kami saw that the laces of Lord Date Ukyō’s ceremonial hat were woven of twisted thread (*yorihibo*[*mo*] ヨリヒボ [縹紐]), while his were the usual flat laces (*uchihibo*[*mo*] ウチヒボ [打紐]). He asked Lord Sakyō about this. “Lord Kōzuke no suke told me that to wear flat laces would be disrespectful toward the imperial envoys and that I should wear twisted laces instead,” was the reply.

⁸ A Buddhist temple of the Jōdo school, Zōjōji was one of the main shogunal temples in Edo and housed the mausoleum of the second shogun, Hidetada 秀忠. Such temples were regularly used as lodgings for imperial and foreign envoys.

⁹ This was Date Sakyō no suke Muratoyo 村豊 (1682–1737), daimyo of Yoshida 吉田 domain (in modern-day Ehime prefecture). Norinaga first wrote the title correctly as Sakyō 左京, but then crossed it out and changed it to Ukyō. Below he tends to use Ukyō but in one instance transcribes the title as Sakyō.

¹⁰ *Kamishimo* was the ordinary ceremonial dress of the samurai; it consisted of a *kataginu* 肩衣 (a sleeveless waistcoat with wide crested shoulders) and hakama of the same color as the under-robe. *Shōzoku* was the round-collared court dress worn for more formal occasions.

Lord Takumi no kami, greatly angered, asked himself why Kōzuke no suke should humiliate him so. How detestable! How mortifying! He thought he could no longer put up with it, but he had not forgotten what Lord Katō Tōtōmi no kami had told him, and he struggled to hide his anger and to calm himself. He took out from his bosom a piece of paper and twisted it into a string. Then, (cutting his finger,) he dyed the paper lace with his blood and used it in place of the flat lace of his hat.

In addition to such humiliations, Kōzuke no suke told every person he encountered that, despite his detailed instructions, Takumi no kami was ignoring his directions and simply acting of his own accord. Being slandered in this way, Asano Takumi no kami Naganori finally could bear it no longer and struck Kira Kōzuke no suke. But because his sword hit a metallic piece inside Kira's hat, he did not succeed in killing him. Kōzuke no suke quickly ran away and escaped. Kajikawa Yosōbyōe 梶川與よさう兵へ¹¹ grabbed Takumi no kami from behind and restrained him. (As a result of Takumi no kami's breach of the etiquette of the castle),¹² there was a great uproar among the retainers of the daimyo, and word that there had been a fight at the castle spread quickly throughout Edo.

But as soon as people heard that the fight was between Asano Takumi no kami and Kōzuke no suke, the uproar quieted down.

On account of his breach of the etiquette of the castle, Lord Takumi no kami was first put into the custody of Lord Tamura Ukyō 田村右京,¹³ and then ordered to commit seppuku the same day.

Takumi no kami's retainers, Hayami Tōzaemon ハヤミタウザヘモン [早水藤左衛門] and Kayano Sanpei かや野さん平 [茅野三平] hurried together back to Ako in Harima, changing horses along the way and not stopping to rest.¹⁴ They covered a distance of more than 150 *ri* 里¹⁵ in just three days and a half.

The day Lord Takumi no kami was ordered to commit seppuku, his retainers all came to receive their lord's remains. Waiting in the room next to the one where he was kept in custody, they begged many times to be allowed to meet their lord one last time, but to no avail.¹⁶ Takumi no kami, knowing that only one thin

¹¹ Kajikawa Yosobyōe Yoriteru 梶川与惣兵衛頼照 (1647–1723). For his record of the incident, see *Kajikawa-shi nikki* 梶川氏日記; in Akō-shi 1987, vol. 3, pp. 5–9. The name by which Kajikawa was commonly known (his *tsūshō* 通称 or *yobina* 呼び名) is usually read today as Yosōbei or Yosobei. Norinaga, however, indicates with furigana here the reading of Yosōbyōe. Below, both where furigana is provided and where it is not, I have transcribed names with –兵へ or –兵衛 as –hyōe (–byōe).

¹² The editors of Norinaga's text indicate that he crossed out the phrase in parentheses.

¹³ Tamura Ukyō taifu Tateaki 田村右京大夫建顕 (1656–1708), was daimyo of Ichinoseki 一関, in present-day Iwate prefecture.

¹⁴ As Tanabe 1999 (no. 541), p. 1, points out, the messengers in fact went by palanquin rather than horseback; express horses had apparently been prohibited under Tsunayoshi's animal protection laws.

¹⁵ One *ri* was a little less than four kilometers.

¹⁶ A scene very similar to this appears in act 4 of *Kanadehon chūshingura*; see Keene 1971, p. 70. The inspiration may have come from the memorandum by Okado Denpachirō 多門伝八郎, a

paper door separated him from his retainers, raised his voice and said: “Although I am ready to commit seppuku, I regret not being able to kill Kōzuke no suke. Even after I die, this regret will stay with me. I will hold this grudge forever, however many times I may be reborn and however many realms of existence I may pass through, until I see the severed head of Kōzuke no suke.” (He then held up in reverence the sword given him by the shogun) and cut his belly. Isoda Budayū いそ[磯]田武大夫 thereupon struck off his head.¹⁷

In accordance with the procedure of the time for conducting seppuku, a square cotton quilt three *shaku* 尺 long on each side was spread out.¹⁸ One man was stationed at each of the four corners of the quilt, and a folding screen was set behind it. The person committing seppuku sat on the quilt. After his head had fallen, the four men stationed at the corners wrapped his body up in the quilt and put it into a coffin, around which they set the screen. The retainers of the deceased could then collect the body and bury it. He was given the posthumous name of Reikōinden Suimōgenri Daikōji れいかう院殿すいもうげんり大居士[冷光院殿吹毛元利].

At Ako castle, all the retainers, beginning with Ōishi Kuranosuke Fujiwara no Yoshio, were busy with their daily duties in the absence of their lord. Ōishi Kuranosuke had many things to take care of, but that day he was feeling anxious. When he left the castle, he saw that bees had made a huge nest under the eaves of the gate and that they were fighting fiercely against some hornets. At that sight, he felt even more anxious.¹⁹ Walking down from the castle, Kuranosuke looked in the direction of Osaka and saw two horsemen racing toward the castle, raising a cloud of dust. When they got nearer, he recognized them to be Hayami Tōzaemon and Kayano Sanpei. The two men fell from their horses as if dead. Hurrying toward them, Kuranosuke raised them up and asked what had happened; they told him the situation.

Ōishi Kuranosuke was stunned. Since new reports might come any minute, he stayed awake all night. The following morning near dawn, Hara Sōemon はらさう右衛門 [原惣右衛門], too, arrived by horseback in great haste. He, too, appeared on the brink of death from exhaustion. Kuranosuke gave him something to drink to revive him and pulled him up from the ground. When he came to, the tears coursed down his face in torrents. He took out from his bosom a slip of paper on which was written the posthumous name of their lord and, sobbing, handed it to Ōishi Kuranosuke.

bakufu inspector who witnessed Asano's seppuku and reported that Kataoka Gengoemon 片岡源五右衛門, one of the retainers closest to Naganori, begged to be permitted a final farewell, and was permitted to view his master from a separate room; see *Okado Denpachirō oboegaki*, pp. 171–72. The Okado memorandum seems not to have been widely known in the early years after the incident, however, and none of the early chronicles mention this episode.

¹⁷ Or Butayū, bakufu inspector (*metsuke* 目付). The editors indicate that Norinaga crossed out the phrase in parentheses in the previous sentence.

¹⁸ One *shaku* is 30.3 centimeters.

¹⁹ For this story, see the introduction, pp. 454–55. Here Norinaga has simply *hachi* 蜂 (bee), not *kobachi* 小蜂 (wasp) as in *Sekijō gishinden* and *Akō seigi*.

(FORGOT)²⁰

The retainers all gathered at the castle. Ōishi Kuranosuke went up to the upper level of the room and addressed the assembled retainers. “Our lord, Takumi no kami, was ordered to commit seppuku because he had acted disrespectfully inside the shogun’s castle. He was granted a sword to disembowel himself. Since he has left no heirs, it is certain that the government will send a military force to take possession of the castle. When that moment comes, should we ultimately agree to give up the castle? Or should we plan to make this castle our tomb and fight to the death?”

Among the retainers, there were those who thought that they should all commit seppuku, accompanying their lord to the afterlife. Others preferred to live and sought to run away. One of the retainers, Okuno Shōgen ヲクノ野将監, said: “Kuranosuke, you should tell us what to do.”²¹

“Under normal circumstances,” Kuranosuke replied, “it is the lord who gives his opinion first, then the councilors discuss the matter; afterwards the rest follow in turn. But now, it seems to me, that kind of distinction no longer applies. Who will serve as my right arm when we attack Kira Kōzuke no suke?” And he looked around at the retainers.

(FORGOT)

“Today we had better leave the castle and go home. Tomorrow, whoever among you thinks that we should die fighting should come to the castle.”

Everybody left the castle.

The following day, about 130 men gathered in the castle. Among them were some who, in despair over the situation, thought that they ought to cut their belly right away. They gathered earlier than the others. Kuranosuke began to speak. “I have an idea,” he said. “Considering the position of Lord Matsudaira Aki no kami 松平安芸守²² and others of the main branch of the Asano house, and considering that Lord Daigaku 大学,²³ the younger brother of our lord, Takumi no kami, is presently under house arrest, we should first send a petition to Edo. Even if it should not be granted, we should try to secure the succession of the Asano family.” He thereupon sent Tagawa たがわ and Tsukioka つきおか²⁴ to Edo to submit the petition.

²⁰ Norinaga inserted a bracketed *wasure*, *wasure nari*, or simply *wa* to indicate points he had forgotten. See figure 1 in the introduction, second line from the end.

²¹ Okuno Shōgen Sadayoshi 奥野将監定良 (1646–1727) held the position of *kumigashira* 組頭 with a 1,000-koku stipend. He was related to Ōishi Kuranosuke through his mother and was a member of the league until dropping out in the eighth month of 1702.

²² Asano Aki no kami Tsunanaga 浅野安芸守綱長 (1659–1708), daimyo of Hiroshima 広島. Tsunanaga, like various other daimyo mentioned below, had been granted the honor of use of the surname Matsudaira, the original name of the Tokugawa house. Norinaga follows the standard convention of referring to him by this honorary surname rather than his original surname of Asano.

²³ Asano Daigaku Nagahiro 浅野大学長広 (1670–1734).

²⁴ Tagawa (or Takawa or Ōkawa) Kuzaemon (or Kyūzaemon) 多川九左衛門 (400 koku) and Tsukioka Jiemon 月岡治右衛門 (300 koku) both initially joined the league of revenge in Akō but later dropped out.

While some were satisfied with this proposal, others were not. After hearing Kuranosuke's words, a man named Ōno Kurobyōe 大野くろ兵へ protested: "If Lord Daigaku is granted the right to continue the house, we could all continue to serve him without disruption. At first I thought that all those who did not come to the castle would lose their stipends, and I planned to gather here early in the morning, but unfortunately I was late because of some important duty. Now I am going to kill myself!" Kuranosuke, laughing to himself, tried to stop him, saying that the two messengers were now on their way to Edo with the petition. But Kurobyōe would not listen to him. "I will commit seppuku here and now," he screamed, "and accompany my lord to the other world!" Somehow people dissuaded him. It was because he was this sort of person that he later made a fool of himself.²⁵ (FORGOT)

Eventually everybody left the castle. Kuranosuke, too, went home. He had a son by a concubine; the son's name was Chikara Yoshikane チカラヨシカネ.²⁶ After Kuranosuke had retired to his bedroom, Chikara pulled out from his father's chest pocket the piece of paper on which was written the posthumous name of Lord Takumi no kami. Thinking of their indebtedness to their lord, he grieved deeply. He wanted to follow his master to the other world, and was about to disembowel himself. But then his father appeared from behind him. Realizing his son's feelings, Kuranosuke stopped him and said: "Although I did not say this to anyone, I will not rest until I take the head of Kira Kōzuke no suke and offer it at the grave of my lord to assuage his bitter regret."²⁷

He wrote down his name, Ōishi Kuranosuke Fujiwara no Yoshio, and the name of his son, Chikara Yoshikane. They cut their little fingers and sealed the paper with their blood. (Thus the first two of the forty-seven retainers who would attack Kōzuke no suke were decided).

Later when another meeting was held at the castle to sign a vow [to fight to protect the castle], Ōno Kurobyōe, Itō Goemon 伊藤五右衛門,²⁸ and other cowardly samurai ran away. (At that time there were about fifty men remaining.)

(FORGOT)

The messengers sent to Edo submitted the petition to Toda Uneme no kami

²⁵ Ōno Kurobyōe, or Kurobei 大野久郎兵衛 (dates unknown), like Kuranosuke was a councilor (*karō* 家老) of the Akō domain. He disagreed with Kuranosuke's faction over the disposition of the domain's financial reserves, and is said to have ended up stealing money and fleeing from Akō. Ōno was demonized as a coward and villain even before the attack on Kira in *Sekijō meiden* 赤城盟伝, a history of the league written by Kanzaki Yogorō 神崎与五郎 and others (see Akōshi 1987, vol. 3, p. 263; and Smith 2002, p. 14). This depiction was perpetuated in Muro Kyūsō's *Akō gijin roku*; see pp. 170–80. Kurobei would be immortalized as a villain in *Kanadehon chūshingura* as Ono Kudayū 斧九太夫.

²⁶ 主税良金 (1688–1703). For Chikara as the son of a concubine, see note 40 below.

²⁷ Norinaga originally wrote ハラサント思ふ ("I plan to assuage. . ."), but crossed it out and replaced it with the more emphatic ハラサズンバアラズ ("I will not rest until . . . I assuage").

²⁸ Itō Goemon (430 koku) held the position of *kumigashira* and was the younger brother of Ōno Kurobyōe (Kurobei).

戸田采女正, a relative of Takumi no kami.²⁹ Their request was refused, however, and they were informed that the daimyo appointed to confiscate the castle had already left Edo. Returning to Ako, they reported the situation. Kuranosuke again summoned the retainers to meet at the castle. He took a seat on the upper level of the room and read the response aloud.

(FORGOT)

That day, too, he sent everybody home, telling them that the following day they should say farewell to their wives and children and ready themselves to die defending the castle. He told them to bring their armor and weapons to the castle, and to prepare to sustain a siege. Kuranosuke, too, went home, but at midnight, he returned to the castle and waited. All the others whose minds were set came soon after. Ōishi Kuranosuke then said to them:

“Until now I have told you that we should die fighting here in the castle, but it was so as to see your true feelings. In fact my intention is to take the head of Kōzuke no suke, whom our lord tried to kill, carry the head to the grave of our lord, and then commit seppuku. I think that this is the only way to appease the tormented spirit of our lord. We will give up the castle without protest and then seek an opportunity to strike Kōzuke no suke.” (An extended debate followed these words, but for reasons of brevity I have recorded only the main point.)

The generals in charge of the confiscation of the castle were Wakizaka Awaji no kami ワキザカアワジ守 and Kinoshita Higo no kami 木下ヒゴ守,³⁰ the government officials accompanying them were Araki Jūzaemon 荒木十左衛門 and Yanagihara Uneme 柳原采女,³¹ and the local magistrates Okada Shōdayu 岡田庄大夫 and Ishihara Shinzaemon 石原新左衛門.³² They all headed toward the Ako domain. The daimyo in the nearby provinces alerted their forces, anticipating that if the Ako retainers offered resistance they would be expected to aid the government force. The daimyo in nearby provinces with access to the sea readied their war boats. Ako was surrounded from all directions.³³ Houses related to Takumi no

²⁹ Toda Uneme no kami Ujisada 戸田采女正氏定 (1659–1719) was daimyo of the domain of Ōgaki 大垣, in present-day Gifu prefecture, and a younger cousin of Asano Naganori. The order of events described here is a bit confused: the petition was intended for the bakufu inspectors Araki Masaha 荒木政羽 and Sakakibara Masayoshi 榊原政殊 (see below, note 31), and when Tagawa and Tsukioka discovered that the group appointed to receive the castle had already left Edo, they were unsure what to do and ended up taking the petition to Toda, whom they knew to be the key intermediary in Edo for the Asano family of Akō. In a subsequent letter to Ōishi, Toda expressed his unhappiness that such a petition had been attempted.

³⁰ Both of these “generals” (*bushō* 武將) were middle-level daimyo: Wakizaka Awaji no kami Yasuteru 脇坂淡路守安照 (1658–1722) was daimyo of Tatsuno 竜野, in present-day Hyōgo prefecture, and Kinoshita Higo no kami Kinsada 木下肥後守公定 (1653–1730) was daimyo of Ashimori 足守, in present-day Okayama prefecture.

³¹ Araki Jūzaemon Masaha (1662–1732) and Sakakibara (not Yanagihara) Uneme Masayoshi (died 1722) were bakufu inspectors (*metsuke* 目付).

³² Okada Shōdayū Toshinobu 俊陳 (1652–1726) and Ishihara Shinzaemon Masauji 正氏 (d. 1710) were bakufu local magistrates (*daikan* 代官) appointed to administer the Akō domain lands after the departure of the Asano retainers.

³³ Norinaga crossed out here the sentence “In the castle, because of the mourning for their lord, they had shrouded the turrets.”

kami also sent messengers to observe the situation. They warned his retainers to surrender the castle quickly; otherwise they would be attacked from all directions and destroyed. There were forces camped everywhere. Inoue Dan'emon イノウエダン右衛門,³⁴ a messenger sent by the lord of the main house, Matsudaira Aki no kami, entered the castle. "Will you surrender the castle?" he asked Kuranosuke. "Look at all the troops surrounding you. If they attack you with a force like this, there will be no possibility to withstand them. Will you surrender the castle or not? That is what I am here to ask."

"Do not threaten us!" replied Kuranosuke. "Even though we may be surrounded by a huge army, it bothers me less than a fly would. Whether or not we shall surrender the castle has nothing to do with you." And he sent the messenger back.

But having a larger plan in mind, Kuranosuke had already decided to surrender the castle. So as to prevent the soiling of his late lord's reputation, he ordered the entire castle cleaned and repaired, from the paths and bridges to the interior of the buildings, and prepared spots for resting at various places. In this way he readied the castle to be surrendered to the government officials.

The officials sent a messenger to the castle to summon Kuranosuke. They read him the shogun's order that the castle was to be surrendered and the various laws obeyed, and indicated that he should respond. Although Kuranosuke was the kind of man who would not lose his composure even if heaven and earth were falling apart, he was so mortified and chagrined that he could not reply. He signed his name to the order with a quivering hand and returned to the castle. In the castle, all had been waiting for Kuranosuke's return and they asked him about the meeting. Kuranosuke told them about the orders, and they realized that that night was the last they would spend in the castle. The castle had been like their own home, and the thought (that now it was going to be someone else's possession) filled their hearts with sadness and made them all cry.³⁵

All of them had been maintaining a strict vigil, guarding against fire and the like, but now they left their positions and climbed the turrets of the castle and looked around at the troops that were surrounding them in all directions. They looked toward the sea and saw the hundreds of war boats lined up. Kuranosuke looked at the pennants and lanterns of the camps of the various forces arrayed around the castle, and recognized the commander of each. "Suppose we were now to fight to the death in this castle," he told his men. "Let's talk about how we would deploy our men against these forces, just for the sake of diversion." He let the others propose their ideas, and then advanced his own. But soon dawn would break, the government envoys would enter the castle, and all the weapons in the castle would be inspected and handed over.

The next morning, making sure that everything was in perfect condition, they waited for the government officials. The officials, Sakakibara Uneme no kami

³⁴ Inoue Dan'emon Masanobu 井上団右衛門正信.

³⁵ Norinaga crossed out the phrase in parentheses.

榊原采女正, Araki Jūzaemon, Ishihara Seizaemon, and Okada Shōdayu,³⁶ all entered through the main gate. Kuranosuke and the other retainers were waiting for them and guided them in. The bows, rifles, and all the other weapons were all checked and handed over. The government envoys inspected every room of the castle and put their seal on each. “Up to now,” Kuranosuke thought, “I was determined that, no matter how formidable our enemies might be, I would never allow them to step into the castle so long as there was breath in my body. I never imagined that I would have to guide them to examine every single room of the castle.” He struggled not to cry as he led the envoys through the castle. When they stopped to rest, Kuranosuke knelt before them with his forehead to the ground and said: “I humbly beg that Takumi no kami’s younger brother Daigaku may be allowed to continue the Asano house and that the retainers of the domain may continue to serve and not be dispersed as rōnin. Please, convey my petition to the shogun once you have returned to Edo.”

But the officials did not deign to reply. They simply stood and ordered him to continue to guide them. When he showed them the second enceinte, Kuranosuke again knelt down by the earthen bridge and, pressing his head to the ground, repeated his plea, but once more the officials paid no attention. Instead, they harshly ordered him to continue guiding them through the castle. Full of resentment, Kuranosuke proceeded with the tour of inspection. Some of the retainers were so frustrated that they were about to attack the magistrates. Barely able to restrain them, Kuranosuke completed the tour. Now they all had to leave the castle. How mortified they must have felt! The same day the castle was handed over to Lord Wakizaka Awaji no kami.

All the retainers returned to their homes and cried out loud.

The castle was surrendered in beautiful condition. There were no tears in the paper doors, and the tatami and everything else were in perfect shape.

When the government officials returned to the inn where they were lodging, they summoned Kuranosuke. “Earlier today,” they told him, “when you handed over the castle, you knelt down near the earthen bridge, pressing your head to the ground, and pleaded with us. We heard your words, but our position did not allow us to give you an answer. However, your appeal reached our heart. When we, Uneme and Jūzaemon, return to Edo, we will make sure to transmit it to those above us.”

Kuranosuke thanked them and left. All the others were waiting for Kuranosuke at his lodgings, and they asked him what had happened. He told them and sent them home. Then he ordered his son Yoshikane to bring him a brazier. Yoshikane

³⁶ The names of these four bakufu officials were all provided earlier in kanji (see p. 474), but with three differences: 1) the previous “Yanagihara” is changed here to “Sakakibara,” the correct name; 2) the previous “Shinzaemon” is given here in katakana, erroneously, as “Seizaemon”; and 3) the previous “Uneme” here becomes “Uneme no kami.” One can only speculate about the circumstances responsible for these differences. The correct characters for names like this could not in most cases be guessed from the sound, so Norinaga must have inquired, perhaps of Jitsudō, who may have given contradictory answers.

thought that his father's request was strange, since it was the fourth month and it would be strange to use a brazier in that season. He did as his father asked, however, and brought the brazier. Kuranosuke took out their pledge, tore it into pieces, and burned it.

"Father, you should commit seppuku!" burst out Yoshikane, who was watching from the side. "Now I understand your real intention. You have surrendered the castle with the excuse that you would instead attack Kōzuke no suke. And now, hoping to save your life, you are burning our pledge! Even if you are my father, on behalf of our lord, I cannot spare your life. You must commit seppuku at once! I will act as your second. What do you say?"

Kuranosuke deliberately did not reply. To test his son's seriousness, he made no excuse and said, "What will you do, then?" "I will kill you!" Yoshikane replied, and he struck at his father with his sword. Kuranosuke quickly restrained him and said: "The reason I burned our vow is because we would be compromised if somebody discovered it. Even without a written statement, a true samurai does not change his heart. That is why I burned it. What an impudent fool you are!" But even as he said this, in his heart, Kuranosuke praised his son.³⁷

ABBR. I will skip the matter of Okajima Yasoemon ヲカジマヤソ[岡嶋八十]右衛門 and Ōno Kurobei.³⁸

ABBR. I will skip the matter of Kuranosuke's visit to Kagakuji クワガク寺 temple.³⁹

Yoshikane was the son of a concubine; he had been separated from his real mother when he was seven years old.⁴⁰ Nonetheless, had his stepmother, Kuranosuke's primary wife, been his true mother, he could not have been more devoted to or cared more for her, and she, in the same way, could not have cared more for him had he been her true son. Kuranosuke and his primary wife had two other sons: the elder, Kichijiyo キチヂヨ,⁴¹ was thirteen years old, and the younger, Daizaburō 大三郎,⁴² was two years old.

³⁷ No earlier or later example of this revealing story has yet been found.

³⁸ The story here must have involved the debates over how to dispose of the domain finances, over which Okajima and Ōno differed. Norinaga transcribes Ōno's name in this instance in kana as "Kurobei." From here on, at various points, he indicates by the word *ryaku* 略 that he is skipping or abbreviating part of Jitsudō's narrative.

³⁹ Built in 1663 on the occasion of the thirty-third anniversary of the death of Asano Naganori's father, Nagashige 長重, Kagakuji 花岳寺 served as the Asano family temple in Akō.

⁴⁰ Yoshikane's age would be six by Western count. The ages mentioned below, too, should be reduced by one year to obtain that by Western count. The allegation that Yoshikane (Chikara) was the son of a concubine and not of Kuranosuke's wife Riku りく (or 理玖) is erroneous, and has not yet been found in any other account.

⁴¹ Or Kichichiyo 吉千代; born in 1691, he was the second son of Kuranosuke and his wife, Riku. He entered a Buddhist monastery at twelve and later took vows as a priest of the Ōbaku 黄檗 school of Zen at Kōkokuji 興国寺, in Yura 由良 (present-day Hyōgo prefecture), and died in 1709 in his nineteenth year.

⁴² This is the childhood name of Ōishi Sotoe Yoshiyasu 大石外衛良恭 (1702-1770); the third son of Kuranosuke and Riku, he was born in the seventh month of 1702, after his parents had parted and Riku had returned to her family home in Toyooka 豊岡 (present-day Hyōgō prefecture).

Kuranosuke's wife summoned Kichijiyo: "It may be," she said, "that you will have to die within the night."

"If I must die, then I will," Kichijiyo replied, "but first I would like to know the reason."

"Your father is going to Edo to take the head of Kōzuke no suke," his mother said. "As you are not yet fifteen years old, you are to be left behind. You already carry the two swords, however, and have the duty to uphold your honor as a samurai. Implore, then, your older brother Yoshikane to take you with the others, and tell him, if that is not possible, you will commit seppuku."

She had him put on a white kimono with pale blue *kamishimo* and sent him to Yoshikane's room. She followed behind, taking her halberd with her. Kichijiyo went to his brother and spoke as he had been told. (I FORGOT WHAT THE BROTHER SAID.)

(FORGOT)

Kuranosuke summoned his wife, Yoshikane, and Kichijiyo. "As I am sure you realize, I am going to Edo," he said his wife. "Since I have made a pledge not to say anything to even my wife or children, I can't reveal my intentions. The reason I am leaving my son Kichijiyo behind is so that, should my revenge not be successful and I die, you should bring him and his brother up, and have them carry on my revenge. If I succeed in killing my enemy, have them take the tonsure and pray for us. That's why I am leaving them at home."

He drank a cup of sake in parting and took his last leave of this world from them. He embarked on a ship, and as it left his hometown far behind, he turned back in tears to gaze at it. Eventually the ship reached Osaka.

The Ako retainers had decided among themselves that they would hide in different places around Osaka, Kyoto, Fushimi 伏見, and Ōtsu 大津. Kuranosuke alone would go to Edo, so as to check on what was happening there, and would let the others know the best moment to attack. All would then hurry there.

When Kuranosuke reached Osaka, he visited Hara Sōemon. Kuranosuke told Sōemon that he was going to Edo to observe the situation, and that when he sent a summons, Sōemon should lead all the other retainers to Edo. Kuranosuke then went to Kyoto and visited Zuikōin ずいくわう院. The temple was closely related to the family of his lord, and the abbot was a relative of Takumi no kami's wife. Kuranosuke met the abbot and gave him 250 ryō in gold to build a grave for his master. He also bought a plot of land for the graves of all the retainers.⁴³ After

⁴³ The connection between Zuikōin 瑞光院, a subtemple of Daitokuji 大徳寺, and the Asano family was established through Asano Naganori's wife Akuri 阿久里 (or 阿久利; 1674–1714), known after Naganori's death as Yōzeiin (or, as Norinaga has it below, Yōsen'in 瑤泉院), and the temple received an annual grant of one hundred koku from the Asano family. A memorial marker for Asano Naganori was erected there by Ōishi in the eighth month of 1701, and in 1719, on the seventeenth memorial of the death of the Akō rōnin, forty-six markers were placed near the monument to Asano. The temple and the stone memorials were moved to their present location in Yamashina in 1962.

discussing the details, he left the temple and spent the night at an inn in Sanjō 三条.

When Kuranosuke arrived in Edo, he went to the Asano family temple of Sengakuji せんがく寺, where his lord was buried, and paid homage at his grave. He then went to the house of Komeya Chūdayū 米屋ちう[忠]大夫 in Hamamatsu-chō ハママツ丁[浜松町],⁴⁴ where he had an introduction, and settled in there.⁴⁵

ABBR. I will not record the details of how Kuranosuke and [Horibe] Yasubyōe やす兵へ, without realizing each other's identity, got into a fight.⁴⁶

Horibe Yahyōe Kanamaru ホリベ[堀部]弥兵へ金丸 and his son-in-law Yasubyōe were Ako samurai who had been stationed in Edo. While waiting for Kuranosuke to arrive in Edo, anxious to avenge their lord, they used to stroll around Kira Kōzuke no suke's mansion disguised as street peddlers, or as beggars, or as daily workers. In this way they patrolled Kira's mansion to check the situation, but it was always guarded extremely closely.

Kuranosuke went to pay his respects to the people who had taken charge of the confiscation of the castle. Then he met Yōsen'in ヤウセン[瑤泉]院, his lord's wife, who was staying with Lord Asano Tosa no kami,⁴⁷ a relative of Takumi no kami. After talking with them, he returned to Komeya Chūdayū's house.

ABBR. I will skip recording the events concerning Fuwa no Kazuemon Masatane フワのカズエモンマサタネ[不破数右衛門正種].

Kuranosuke pondered Kōzuke no suke's precautions and the tight guard around his mansion; it would be better, he decided, to return to Kyoto for the moment. He thus sent his son Chikara Yoshikane on ahead.

ABBR. I will not record the details of how Ōno Kurobyōe and his son brought shame on themselves.

On the fourteenth day of the eighth month, the monthly anniversary of their lord's death, the former retainers who were in Edo, including Kuranosuke, Horibe Yahyōe Kanamaru, his son-in-law Yasubyōe, Nakamura Kansuke 中村カンスケ [勘介], Kanzaki Yōgorō Noriyasu カンザキヨ五郎ノリヤス[神崎与五郎則休], Kawamura Denbyōe 川村デン[伝]兵へ, and Yokogawa Kanpei 横川ヨコカワカンヘイ[勘

⁴⁴ The contributions of Komeya Chūdayū to the league both during Kuranosuke's first trip to Edo and again in the weeks leading up to the attack on Kira are well documented; see the summary in *Akō gishi jiten*, p. 386.

⁴⁵ While Jitsudō has Ōishi going directly to Edo after stopping only briefly in Kyoto to visit Zuikōin, in fact he settled first in Yamashina and went to Edo several months later, in the tenth month of 1701, staying for about one month.

⁴⁶ As Tanabe 1999 (no. 544), p. 3, notes, it is tantalizing not to know more of this account of a fight between the two great rivals in the league, Ōishi Kuranosuke and Horibe Yasubei 堀部安兵衛. No such episode is found anywhere else.

⁴⁷ This was Asano Nagasumi 浅野長澄 (1671–1714), daimyo of Miyoshi 三次 (a branch domain of Hiroshima) and a nephew of Takumi no kami's wife. Born as second son of the lord of the main Asano house in Hiroshima, he had been adopted by the lord of Miyoshi.

平], visited the grave of their lord. They rented a small room at Sengakuji and talked together. All wanted to take vengeance on their enemy as soon as possible, to take Kōzuke no suke's head without a day's further delay. Kuranosuke alone remained calm and explained the dangers of acting impetuously. Impressed by his arguments, the others decided that he should act as their leader, and thereafter returned home.

Kuranosuke, too, returned to Komeya Chūdayū's house.

ABBR. I will not record the details of how Matsudaira Aki no kami [the head of the Asano main house] sent a message to Kuranosuke by Watanabe Kumaemon ワタナベクマ右衛門.

Kuranosuke had some retainers remain in Edo and sent the others all back to Kyoto. After paying a visit to the Ise shrines, he, too, went back to Kyoto.

ABBR. I will not record the details of how Kuranosuke met on the street the physician Terai Genkei 寺井元ケイ.⁴⁸

Kuranosuke's son Chikara Yoshikane, who had returned to Kyoto before him, was staying with their friend Shindō Genshirō シンドウ源四郎,⁴⁹ in the village of Nishinoyama 西ヤマ, in Yamashina. Kuranosuke joined him there.

Thereupon, Kuranosuke purposely started behaving so as to become an object of public contempt, with the aim of getting Kōzuke no suke to loosen his guard. He indulged in various frivolous activities. He gathered good timber and built a splendid house in Nishinoyama village, purchased some fields, and lived in luxury.

ABBR. I will not record the details of how Kuranosuke schemed to spread the popularity of Inari いなり.⁵⁰

Kuranosuke began to spend an immense amount of money on a courtesan named Ukifune うき船, from a house in Shimoku-machi シモク町 in Fushimi.⁵¹ He also

⁴⁸ Terai Genkei 寺井玄溪 (1622–1711) was an Akō domain doctor residing in Kyoto whom Ōishi trusted deeply; he had wanted to join in the attack on Kira himself, but Ōishi urged him rather to live on and tell the story of the league. See Ōishi's letter to Terai of 1702.8.6, in Akō-shi 1987, vol. 3, p. 297.

⁴⁹ Shindō Genshirō Toshimoto 進藤源四郎俊式 (1651–1731) was an Asano retainer with a post of *ashigarugashira* 足輕頭 and a stipend of 400 koku; he was related to Ōishi Kuranosuke in several ways: his mother was the sister of Ōishi's grandfather, his first wife was Ōishi's aunt, and he adopted Ōishi's daughter Ruri ルリ (see genealogy in Akō-shi 1987, vol. 1, p. 366). The Shindō family held land in the Yamashina area east of Kyoto, and it was here, in the village of Nishinoyama, that Genshirō arranged for Ōishi to live after his departure from Akō. The story mentioned below of Ōishi building a fine house on the property is unattested.

⁵⁰ "Inari" may indicate the popular Fushimi Inari shrine, and hence serve as a metonymic reference to the Fushimi pleasure quarter itself.

⁵¹ This woman, presumably fictional, appears in other accounts as Ukihashi 浮橋. See the discussion in the introduction, p. 458. The place-name, 撞木町, is usually pronounced Shumoku-machi.

visited a woman called Okaru おかる.⁵² He dressed her in an elegant outfit and strolled around the city with her. He did many outlandish things. Therefore, not only people in the capital, but also those from the nearby provinces derided him. But there were also other people who suspected that he was secretly plotting something.

As a consequence of all this, the other retainers, too, came to regard him with suspicion, thinking that he had, in fact, become a degenerate fool. On the other hand, he always had Okaru ask those retainers about the size of their clothes, so as to be able to prepare the special garments to wear on the day of the vendetta.

Then it was the thirteenth day of the third month—the day before the first anniversary of the death of his lord, Takumi no kami—but Kuranosuke did not show any concern. He seemed to have forgotten it. He purposely continued to act like an idiot. He went to the pleasure quarter of Fushimi and drank a lot of sake. The following day his son Yoshikane and Okaru urged him to visit the grave of his lord at Zuikōin. He pretended he had forgotten what day it was, and then went to pray for his lord together with Okaru.

The other retainers all thought that even though Kuranosuke had talked at first about a plan to take revenge, he had in fact turned out to be a coward. Thus lamenting, they, too, went to pay their respects at the temple.

ABBR. I will not record the details of how the abbot of Zuikōin, a Zen temple with a sign at the front gate prohibiting the drinking of sake and such, scolded Kuranosuke for bringing a woman with him, and of what he replied. I will also skip recording how he explained to the other retainers that these things were all part of his plan.

ABBR. I will not record the details of how Kuranosuke, returning home from Fushimi, encountered a rough fellow known as Chōzō 長蔵 the Ox, a cowherd, and how he started a quarrel and deliberately got cut across the forehead.⁵³

When people heard that Kuranosuke had gotten a cut across his forehead from Chōzō the Ox, they all thought that he had cast aside the way of the samurai. They even started calling him a bastard son of a bitch.

ABBR. I will not record the details of how Kayano Sanpei committed seppuku because of the conflicting claims of loyalty and filial piety.⁵⁴

⁵² For the identity of Okaru and the way in which she is presented in this account, see the introduction, pp. 458–59.

⁵³ According to Tanabe 1999, (no. 547), p. 3, the story of Chōzō the Ox (Kote no Chōzō くての長蔵) appears in a later *kōdan* 講談 version, where he is described as a horse groom (*umakata* 馬方) rather than a cowherd. A similar story later grew up around the legendary character of the Satsuma swordsman Murakami Kiken 村上喜剣, who is said to have kicked Kuranosuke in the street and cursed him for his dissipation, and who, upon learning of the success of revenge, committed suicide at Ōishi's grave; see Fukumoto 1914, pp. 893–94, for the origins of the legend, which became widespread in the nineteenth century and appeared as the story of the “Satsuma man” in A. B. Mitford's account of the Akō revenge (Mitford 1871, pp. 35–36).

⁵⁴ Kayano, mentioned earlier as one of the first two messengers to carry the news of Asano's

In the meantime, Kōzuke no suke was beginning to loosen his guard.

Kuranosuke ordered the dress to be used on the day of the vendetta from a man named Kikuya Yahyōe 菊屋弥兵へ.⁵⁵ He chose black haori of high-quality woolen cloth, with stomach bands and coats of mail underneath. The gauntlets and leggings were also mailed. The helmets had an extra layer of metal inside the crown. He also arranged that each person should carry fifteen ryō at the time of the vendetta. (This was to indicate that they were not poor.) This was all part of Kuranosuke's plan: in this way, should they fail in their revenge and be killed in Kōzuke no suke's mansion, people would not think that, having lost their stipends, they had broken into his house as burglars.

Kuranosuke was particularly worried about how to arrange for the necessary weapons. Hitting upon a plan, he paid a visit to the Osaka town elder (*sōjukurō* 惣宿老) Amanoya Rihyōe アマノヤ[天野屋]利兵へ.⁵⁶

ABBR. I will not record the details of how Kuranosuke got Rihyōe to pledge his life and to place an order for the armor and weapons under the pretext that they were for use at Osaka castle. Having agreed, once the weapons were ready, Rihyōe marked them as the property of Osaka castle and sent them to Edo. As a result, Rihyōe and his son were arrested and subjected to brutal torture, but they never confessed, and before they had been brought to the point of death, Kuranosuke succeeded in carrying out his mission.

Thereafter Rihyōe and his son were regarded as in fact upright people. Rihyōe's son, changing his name from Sōjirō 惣二郎, adopted the name Amano Rihyōe. He is now said to be at the service of Lord Matsudaira Aki no kami, supplying military provisions, and receiving a stipend of five hundred koku.

Takumi no kami's younger brother Lord Daigaku had continued to be under house arrest. Eventually, the decision was made to put him under the custody [of the main Asano house] in Aki province. Kuranosuke and the others began to gather one by one in Edo to pursue their enemy.

ABBR. I will not record the details of how Takebayashi Tadashichi's 武林ただ[唯]七 father Heizaemon 平左右衛門 and his mother killed themselves in order to encourage their son to act loyally.⁵⁷

attack on Kira to Akō, was a member of the league of revenge whose parents arranged against his wishes for him to enter the service of another daimyo. Caught in a bind of loyalty and filiality, he took his life on 1702.1.14, the memorial day of Asano's death. He would become a model for Hayano Kanpei 早野勘平 in *Kanadehon chūshingura*.

⁵⁵ No other references to this person could be found.

⁵⁶ Regarding Amanoya, see the introduction, pp. 455–56.

⁵⁷ This and various other similar stories of parents of the rōnin committing suicide in order to encourage their sons are all apocryphal, as are those describing the suicide of various parents (almost all mothers) after the seppuku of the rōnin. In the case of Takebayashi, he clearly reported both of his parents as alive on the list of relatives (*shinruigaki* 親類書) that he provided the authorities after being taken into custody.

ABBR. I will not record the details of how more than forty men, beginning with Kuranosuke, met at Jūami ジウアミ⁵⁸ at Maruyama 丸[円]山, in Higashiyama ward.⁵⁹

ABBR. I will not record the details of how Hara Sōemon parted from his son.⁶⁰

ABBR. I will not record the details about how Kuranosuke said farewell to his concubine Okaru and left for Edo, and how Okaru cut her hair, gave it to Kuranosuke, and killed herself.

All the retainers were gathering in Edo one by one. Three or four were still to arrive, but they, too, reached Edo in four days and a half.

ABBR. I will not record the details of how a certain Yatō Chōsuke ヤトウ長助, unable to take part in the revenge because of illness and thinking it dishonorable as a samurai to die of a disease, committed seppuku. He had his son Yatō Emoshichi ヤトウエモ七 take his head to Kuranosuke.⁶¹

It was decided that Kuranosuke should be the commander of the main force, which was to attack the front gate of the mansion, and his son Chikara Yoshikane the commander of the other force, which was to attack the rear gate. The retainers were divided into groups numbered according to the syllabary, with three persons forming the *i* い group, another three the *ro* ろ group, and so forth.⁶²

After reaching Edo, Kuranosuke changed his name to Kakimi Heizaemon カキミ平左衛門. His son Chikara became Kakimi Sanai カキミサナイ.⁶³

They decided to make the attack on the night of the nineteenth day of the twelfth month, the night of *setsubun* セツブン[節分].⁶⁴ But then, they learned that on the

⁵⁸ Jūami 重阿弥 was one of several branches of the Jishū 時宗 school temple of An'yōji 安養寺, which was a large complex in the area east of Yasaka 八坂 shrine, in the hills of Higashiyama. Such places were widely used for parties and meetings.

⁵⁹ The "Maruyama conference" (Maruyama *kaigi* 円山会議), held on 1702.7.28, was attended by nineteen people; it marked a key turning point in the history of the league of revenge, for it was here that Ōishi Kuranosuke finally committed himself wholly to revenge on Kira.

⁶⁰ Hara's son mentioned here must be his heir Jūjirō 重次郎, who was age five at the time of his father's death and took the tonsure to avoid banishment when he reached maturity. After the pardon of the heirs of the rōnin in 1709, Jūjirō left the priesthood and became a retainer of the main Asano house in Hiroshima; see Akō-shi 1987, vol. 1, p. 305.

⁶¹ Yatō Chōsuke Noriteru 矢頭長介 教照 had served Takumi no kami with a stipend of 20 koku. He died not of suicide, but of illness; his date of death is often given as 1702.8.15 (*Akō gishi jiten*, p. 313), but appears as 1702.10.14 in a letter written by his son Emoshichi 右衛門七; see Akō-shi 1987, vol 3, pp. 337-38.

⁶² By the time of this account in 1744, the convention of assigning one kana of the syllabary to each of the forty-seven rōnin was well established; no other example is known, however, of the system described here, where each kana was for a group of three.

⁶³ Kuranosuke had often used the alias Ikeda Kueemon 池田九右衛門 on letters written from Yamashina, but in Edo he took the name Kakimi Gorobei 垣見五郎兵衛, posing as an older relative of his son Chikara, who took the name Kakimi Sanai 垣見左内. For a list of the aliases used by of the Akō rōnin, see Akō-shi 1987, vol. 1, p. 154.

⁶⁴ The night before the calendrical beginning of spring.

fourteenth, Lord Kira Kōzuke no suke, who was a devotee of the tea ceremony, was planning a tea ceremony to which he had invited Lord Ōtomo Ōmi no kami 大友近江守. [Ōtaka] Gengo [大高] 源五, who had become a pupil of the tea master Yamada Sōhen ヤマダサウヘン, had heard this.⁶⁵ He also managed to inquire casually about the details of Lord Kōzuke no suke's mansion, and reported this information to Kuranosuke. They thus decided to make the attack on the fourteenth rather than the nineteenth. Fortuitously, the fourteenth was also the day of Lord Takumi no kami's death. The loyal samurai waited impatiently for the fourteenth to come.⁶⁶

The retainers all sent messengers to their hometown to convey their farewells in this life to their families.

ABBR. I will not record the details of how, from the time of Kuranosuke's arrival in Edo until the day of the vendetta, retainers had taken turns every night spying on Kōzuke no suke's mansion in various disguises. From midnight of the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, it was Kanzaki Yōgorō Noriyasu's turn. He was disguised as a peddler of *dengaku* snacks.⁶⁷ With the approach of dawn, he was about to leave, but when he went to the rear gate of Lord Kōzuke no suke's mansion, he saw Kuranosuke, dressed like a beggar and wrapped in a rush mat. (It had been snowing since the day before.) Emerging from the snow, Kuranosuke accompanied Yōgorō home. His son Yoshikane had been watching at the front gate in the same fashion.

Prior to this, on the day of the thirteenth, the retainers had all gone to Kuranosuke's place. (He was staying at Koku-chō コク丁[石町]) Father and son were wrapped in quilts and sitting close to the brazier. The others had criticized them, saying that this was not the way that one planning to die the next day should behave. But now, Kanzaki Yōgorō discovered them in the snow and, shocked, was moved to tears. Kuranosuke told him that he and his son had spent all the previous nights in the same way, watching Kira's mansion. They were truly great men, rare to encounter nowadays.

On the very eve of the attack, Okuno Shōgen and Shindō Genshirō had a change of heart and did not join the others.⁶⁸ At the beginning, when there was talk of making a stand at the castle, both had gathered at the castle with their armor, but later they had a change of heart. The number of the men was thus forty-seven,

⁶⁵ The story of Ōtaka Gengo and Yamada Sōhen 山田宗偏 is well documented in the primary materials; see the account in *Akō-shi* 1987, vol. 1, pp. 183–86.

⁶⁶ According to the historical consensus about the sequence of events, the date for the attack was originally set not for the nineteenth, but for the sixth day of the twelve month, when a tea gathering was scheduled to be held at Kira's residence. The gathering was canceled, however, and the rōnin therefore had to reschedule the attack for the fourteenth.

⁶⁷ Norinaga has *rengaku* レンガク, a variant pronunciation of *dengaku* 田楽, pieces of taro potato or tofu toasted with a sweet miso topping.

⁶⁸ It appears that Okuno Shōgen and Shindō Genshirō (see above, pp. 472 and 480) had in fact both left the league by the eighth month of 1702, and therefore never reached Edo.

but because Kayano Sanpei Shigetsugu had earlier followed his lord in death, it appears that forty-six men took part in the attack on Kōzuke no suke's mansion.⁶⁹

The morning of the fourteenth, all the retainers went to Sengakuji to pay homage at the tomb of their lord.⁷⁰ They had all gathered to offer their respects, but Yokogawa Kanpei had not yet arrived. Kanpei, in fact, on his way to Sengakuji had stopped to call on a priest with whom he was friendly named Gachō 臥朝, who lived in Hayashi-chō ハヤシ[林]町, in Honjo 本所. Kanpei had a small debt to him, and stopped to see him in regard to that, but just then a servant arrived with a message from Lord Kōzuke no suke for Gachō. As Gachō was a practitioner of the tea ceremony, Lord Kōzuke no suke wanted to invite him to attend the tea gathering arranged for that evening in honor of Lord Ōtomo Ōmi no kami. Since Yokogawa Kanpei happened to be there when the messenger arrived, he wrote a reply in Gachō's place and (so as to be able to check on the situation there) went to Lord Kōzuke no suke's mansion as Gachō's messenger.⁷¹ He thus was able to inspect the mansion from top to bottom. When he joined the others at Sengakuji and told them what happened, Kuranosuke and the others were delighted. What Kanpei observed was just as Gengo had heard previously. They thus had a good overall picture of the layout of Kōzuke no suke's residence.

Kuranosuke then explained the procedures to be followed, from the assault on the mansion to Kōzuke no suke's beheading, and what to do thereafter. He wrote out all the points on a piece of paper and had the retainers seal it in blood. (I will abbreviate here the details.) The general points were as follows.

First, they were to wear haori of black wool lined in dark red with two white stripes on the front as an insignia. Their helmets were to be reinforced with a second, inner crown. Each was to carry fifteen ryō together with a signed piece of paper stating that the money should be given to those who disposed of the corpse. A letter of the syllabary, indicating the group to which each belonged, was written on the silver ornament on their helmets. The three-man groups were to assist each other, but not to pay attention to the rest. So as to look as if they were inspectors charged with looking out for fire, they should carry ladders, big hammers, and buckets, but they should sneak into the mansion quietly, without

⁶⁹ Kayano's proper name was Shigezane 重実, not Shigetsugu. Note that the totals here do not include Terasaka Kichiemon 寺坂吉右衛門, who historically took part in the attack but left shortly after and was not among the forty-six taken into custody; for more on Terasaka, see Smith forthcoming.

⁷⁰ No primary evidence exists for a visit of the rōnin to Sengakuji the morning before the attack on Kira, and such an act would have surely been risky, but since the fourteenth was the memorial day of Asano's death, the story had a natural appeal and appeared in various of the early chronicles, such as *Akō gijin roku* (p. 294) and *Sekijō gishinden* (p. 294).

⁷¹ This story, for which there is no corroboration in the primary sources, appears as a note added to the later (ca. 1709) version of *Ako gijin roku* (p. 294). In that account, the person Yokogawa Kanpei visits is an anonymous, illiterate rōnin and the date is unspecified. *Sekijō gishinden* repeats the story, but gives the date as the tenth and makes the rōnin an anonymous recluse (桑門 *sōmon*; pp. 288–89). The episode does not appear in *Akō seigi*, which features a completely different story about Yokogawa, and may have later disappeared from the oral tradition.

letting anyone know they were there. Once they succeeded in taking Lord Kōzuke's head, they should blow on the whistle that each was to carry. As soon as they heard the whistle all should assemble.

They should not concern themselves with anyone but Kira. They should avoid meaningless killing, and not bother women and children, but should finish off anyone who attacked them. In striking down Kōzuke no suke, even if it was not done cleanly and they had to tear it off, they should take his head at all costs. They should not damage the walls or act rowdily and should not touch any weapons or armaments. They should, however, check into anything suspicious. There also was a possibility that shogunal officers would come to investigate the situation while the fighting was still going on. Should that happen, one person should go out to meet the officers, and, even if Kōzuke no suke had not yet been captured, tell them that the retainers had already killed him, but that as they were still scattered in different parts of the mansion, they would let the officers in as soon as they had assembled in one place. The merit of those who stood on guard outside the mansion was to be the same as those who grappled with Lord Kōzuke.

After everything was set, they returned to their lodgings. When night fell, the group that was to attack the front of the mansion under Kuranosuke assembled and dressed themselves at Horibe Yahyōe's place. The group that was to attack the rear gate, led by Chikara, assembled and dressed themselves at Maibara [Maebara] Isuke's マイバラエスケ[前原伊助] place. Horibe Yahyōe's nephew was sent ahead to keep watch at the mansion and to see when Lord Ōtomo Ōmi no kami left it. As soon as Lord Ōtomo left, he hurried back to inform the others. All started marching toward the mansion. Kuranosuke's group of twenty-four men climbed over the wall from the front of the mansion. Chikara's group of twenty-three men entered from the rear and surrounded the mansion. Kuranosuke's group flung open the door of the entrance hall and stealthily headed for the bedrooms. First, however, they cut the strings of the bows that were lined up near the entrance and hid the spears and rifles. Kuranosuke stuck a piece of paper into a tatami at the entrance; on it he wrote that they were foregoing the normal niceties and breaking into the mansion because of the irresistible demands of the way of lord and vassal. They moved steadily toward the inner rooms, paying no heed to the sleeping men they encountered, but a boy sleeping there started awake. Threatening that he was a dead man if he raised his voice, they tied him up and pushed him to the side, but he managed to twist free and escape. Wakened by the alarm he raised, other samurai came out to fight the retainers.

ABBR. I will not record the details of how the fight intensified.

Looking towards the wall of the neighboring mansion, they saw a large number of lanterns raised high. "This is Tsuchiya Chikara 土屋チカラ,"⁷² a voice declared.

⁷² Tsuchiya Chikara 土屋主税 (1660–1730) was a hatamoto whose residence was located on the north side of Kira's mansion.

“If robbers have broken into your house we will help you fight them.” Horibe Yahyōe came out. “We are Takumi no kami’s retainers,” he replied. “We are here to avenge our lord.” The lanterns were all withdrawn; instead the people on the other side threw a large number of oranges over the wall so that the retainers could relieve their thirst.

The retainers ran here and there, but they could not find any room that seemed to be Kira’s bedroom. Then they saw two or three warriors guarding a room. Convinced that this was Kōzuke no suke’s bedroom, they all rushed inside. They did not meet any strong resistance and easily entered. “Now that things have come to this point,” they cried, “come out without protesting and let us take your head!” But there was no answer.

They broke the paper doors and entered the room, but nobody was there. The quilts, when they felt them, were still warm, a sure sign that Kōzuke no suke could not have gotten very far. They searched everywhere for him, but could not find him. As they had not yet searched inside the coffer and chests of drawers, they began to check these, too. But of Lord Kōzuke there was no trace. Next they lifted up the tatami and thrust their swords into the cracks between the boards underneath. People hiding under the veranda tried to run away, but the retainers caught them and tied them up. Soon they ran out of rope, so they opened the front gate and, after checking them one by one, released the people they had caught. Still they could not find Lord Kōzuke.

While the others went outside to look, Kuranosuke remained in the great hall. Seeing him all alone, three notable warriors, experts with the spear and sword, clambered up the pillars and attacked him from above. (They were Kobayashi Heihachi 小林平八,⁷³ a famous spearman, and the noted swordsmen Shudō Yoichiemon 首藤与一右衛門 and Suzuki Motoemon 鈴木元右衛門.) Being one against three, Kuranosuke was put in a tight spot, but he managed to fight back and killed them all.

The eastern sky was beginning to lighten, but of Kōzuke no suke there was still no trace. The retainers gathered at the great hall. “Dawn is about to break and the shogun’s guards could arrive any minute,” they said to each other. “It would be better to commit seppuku here, rather than risk the dishonor of being caught and bound and having our heads lopped off. What an unfortunate fate!” But Kuranosuke stopped them: “Hold on!” he said. “Don’t give up! There may be a secret cellar in the ground. See if you can’t find something that looks like a cellar.” The retainers began to poke the ground. “Last year,” Kanzaki Yogorō said, “they collected a lot of one-inch thick zelkova boards. Working as a day laborer, I helped carry those boards here, and I thought at the time that something was strange. For sure they must have used them to cover a secret cellar in the ground.”

⁷³ Kobayashi was a retainer of the Uesugi 上杉 house, which was closely related to Kira. His skills as a spearman are reported also in *Kōseki kenmonki* 江赤見聞記, and he would become a fixture of later *kōdan*.

They noticed a teahouse where the earthen floor was mounded up. The secret cellar must be under the teahouse, they thought. Pulling up the tatami and flooring, they caught sight of a light, but the moment they removed the boards it went out.

“He’s here!” Kuranosuke thought. “Sire,” he declared politely, “we are here to take your head.”

Again there was no answer. With lanterns in hand they went down into the cellar. They found a secret passage and followed it. Meanwhile, Horibe Yahyōe Kanamaru was crouching near an artificial mound in the garden topped by a small Inari shrine, in order to block that possible escape route. Suddenly a man emerged from the ground at the foot of the Inari shrine. His hair was pulled back in the style of one in retirement, and he wore a yellow kimono with wide sleeves and a womanly sash. (It was Lord Kōzuke.)⁷⁴

“It’s him!” Yahyōe thought and grabbed him. He started to whistle to the others, but another man appeared and seized him from behind, helping Lord Kōzuke to escape. Yahyōe was almost done in, but Takebayashi Tadashichi came to his aid, killed the man who was holding him, and helped him capture Lord Kōzuke. They dragged Lord Kōzuke to the great hall.

Kuranosuke asked who had captured him. Yahyōe was the first to catch him and then Takebayashi Tadashichi, was the reply. Kuranosuke faced Lord Kōzuke and bowed with his hands on the floor. “With all due respect I must tell you that, unable otherwise to uphold the way of lord and vassal, we have come to take your head. I ask you to commit seppuku without further ado.” Lord Kōzuke, however, did not reply. He tried to escape, but found himself surrounded on all sides. The retainers were ready to strike him down at any moment. With nothing else to do, he began to make excuses. “It was Lord Takumi no kami who tried to kill me (without paying any heed to the place where we were). I ignored him and ran away. You can see here where he struck me. (For his act he was ordered to commit seppuku.) There are no grounds for you to kill me, saying that it is to avenge your lord!”

At that Kuranosuke gave a signal, and Takebayashi Tadashichi struck off Kira’s head. Then all the others, beginning with Kuranosuke, struck the corpse in turn, saying “Take this as vengeance for our lord!” The corpse was reduced to shreds. Yoshida Chūzaemon 吉田テウ[忠]左衛門 and Tomimori Sukedayū トミモリスケダユ⁷⁵ took the head and, keeping out of sight, boarded a small boat at Ryōgoku 両国 for Sengakuji. The others took a false head (this was so it would

⁷⁴ For the unique nature of this intriguing account of the way in which Kira was found, see the introduction, p. 459.

⁷⁵ The same person is named below as Tomimori Sukeemon 富森助右衛門. As noted in the introduction (p. 457), the identification of these two retainers as those charged with carrying the true head to Sengakuji is at odds with the reference to them in the following paragraph as being assigned to report to the bakufu authorities the successful completion of the vendetta; it is also at odds with other manuscript chronicles and *jitsuroku* accounts. Presumably it results from confusion on the part of either Jitsudō or Norinaga.

not matter even if it were confiscated).⁷⁶ Having made sure that there was no danger of fire breaking out in the mansion, they left by the rear gate. Eighteen of the enemy were killed and more than ten wounded.⁷⁷ On the retainers' side, two were wounded, but only lightly.

As they left from the rear gate, Tsuchiya Chikara again came out. "Allow me to congratulate you on achieving your aim," he said. "What a splendid accomplishment!" Yoshida Chūzaemon and Tomimori Sukeemon were sent to Lord Sengoku Hōki no kami セングクハウキ守 to say that the retainers had no intention to escape and were heading to Sengakuji, where they would wait for the government's judgment.⁷⁸ On their way to Sengakuji, they knocked at the gate of Ekōin エカウ[回向]院 temple, but were not allowed to enter. They thus stopped at the inn of Sakaya Jūhyōe 酒屋十兵へ to have a drink before continuing on to Sengakuji. When they passed in front of the gate of the mansion of Lord Wakizaka Awaji no kami, they were stopped and asked who they were. They did not hide who they were, and told what had happened, and the gatekeeper allowed them to pass on.⁷⁹ They were questioned again when they arrived at the mansion of Lord Matsudaira Mutsu no kami 松平ムツ[陸奥]守.⁸⁰ They explained the situation, but the gatekeepers would not let them pass and told them to wait. When they appealed to Lord Mutsu no kami, he invited all of them to enter the mansion. "Although I cannot approve of such actions, you have shown yourselves to be true samurai," he said, and he offered them a cup of sake. They passed the cup of sake among their ranks and returned it to Kuranosuke. Saying that he would take it as a memento to put on Lord Takumi no kami's grave, Kuranosuke was about to put it in his bosom.

"Leave it with me," Lord Mutsu no kami said. "That would be too much of an honor," Kuranosuke replied. "Then give it instead to my son, Tsunamura ツナムラ,"⁸¹ the lord said. Kuranosuke thus offered the cup to the young lord, and the retainers proceeded to Sengakuji, escorted by a large force of Lord Mutsu no kami's men.

It is said that the gatekeepers of Lord Mutsu no kami's mansion, who stopped the retainers, were rewarded by being elevated to the status of samurai with a stipend of five hundred koku. The gatekeepers of Lord Awaji no kami's mansion,

⁷⁶ For variant stories about the disposition of Kira's head(s), and the different routes taken, see the introduction, pp. 456–57.

⁷⁷ The bakufu inspectors who investigated the Kira mansion reported sixteen dead (other than Kira himself); see Noguchi 1994, pp. 172–74.

⁷⁸ Sengoku Hisanao 仙石久尚 (1655–1735) was a hatamoto (1,500 koku) and one of the two chief inspectors (*ōmetsuke* 大目付) of the bakufu at the time.

⁷⁹ Wakizaka was one of the daimyo charged with overseeing the surrender of Akō castle. See above, p. 474.

⁸⁰ Date Tsunamura 伊達綱村 (1659–1719), daimyo of Sendai 仙台 domain.

⁸¹ There is some confusion here, as Tsunamura was the daimyo (although he retired in 1703 at the age of forty-five), not his son, "the young lord" (*wakadono* 若殿).

on the other hand, were stripped of the status of samurai (*ahōbarai* 阿房払い) for not having stopped the retainers.⁸²

After gathering at Sengakuji, they all proceeded to the grave of their lord. The priests of the temple locked the front gate, in case a force should come in pursuit of the retainers. The men sent as an escort by Lord Mutsu no kami stood guard in front of the gate so as to prevent the retainers from escaping.

Kuranosuke placed the head of Lord Kōzuke no suke in front of his lord's grave. He then offered up the dagger he had received from Lord Takumi no kami. "Today we have brought Kōzuke no suke here," he declared. "My Lord, strike him as you please!"

The retainers all burnt incense and wept with joy.

The vendetta took place on the fourteenth day of the twelfth month of the fifteenth year of Genroku.

The head of Lord Kōzuke no suke was handed over to the priests of Sengakuji. When the family temple of Kōzuke no suke came to ask for it, the abbot said that he could not hand it over on his own authority. He thus consulted Lord Abe Hida no kami 阿部飛弾[驪]守,⁸³ who ordered that the head should be returned to Kira's family temple. On the nineteenth day of the twelfth month, at eleven o'clock, the head was transferred to Kira's family temple and buried together with his body.

The abbot of Sengakuji, after telling Kuranosuke, informed Lord Abe Hida no kami about the retainers of Lord Takumi no kami. Lord Abe Hida no kami summoned the forty-seven men. They came dressed in the same clothes as they had worn on the day of the attack. At the entrance, they handed over their swords. The inspectors Mizuno Kozaemon 水野小左衛門 and Suzuki Gen'emon 鈴木源右衛門⁸⁴ queried the retainers, and Kuranosuke explained the situation. The inspectors then told the retainers that orders would be handed down later about further interrogation of each of them. For the time being, in accordance with the law of the realm, they were to be allowed to keep their swords and were to be taken into custody. They were thereby entrusted to the custody of different daimyo.

The circumstances of custody:

Lord Hosokawa Etchū no kami 細川越中守⁸⁵ had custody of the following seventeen samurai:

⁸² *Ahōbarai* was a form of banishment in which a samurai was stripped of his swords.

⁸³ Abe Hida no kami Masataka 阿部飛驒守正喬 (1669–1714) was at the time prefect of temples and shrines (*jisha bugyō* 寺社奉行).

⁸⁴ Mizuno Kozaemon (1664–1778) and Suzuki Gengoemon 源五右衛門 (not Gen'emon; 1660–1743) were the bakufu inspectors sent to meet the Akō rōnin at Sengakuji after the attack on Kira.

⁸⁵ Hosokawa Tsunatoshi 細川綱利 (1643–1714) was daimyo of Kumamoto 熊本 (present-day Kumamoto prefecture), 540,000 koku.

1. Ōishi Kuranosuke 大石内藏之介[助],⁸⁶ chief councilor (*karō* 家老): 1,500 koku; age 45.
2. Hara Sōemon Mototoki 原惣右衛門モト、キ[元辰], foot soldier commander (*ashigarugashira* 足輕頭): 300 koku; age 55.
3. Kataoka Gengoemon 片岡源五右衛門, chief steward (*sobayōnin* 側用人): 350 koku; age 36.
4. Mase Kyūdayū 間瀬久大[太]夫, chief inspector (*ōmetsuke* 大目付): 300 koku; age 63.
5. Onodera Jūnai 小野寺重[十]内, Kyoto representative (*Kyō rusui* 京留主[守]居): 150 koku; age 60.
6. Yoshida Chūzaemon 吉田忠左衛門, county magistrate (*gundai* 郡代): 200 koku; age 63.
7. Isogai Jūrōzaemon 磯貝十郎左衛門, steward (*yōnin* 用人): 150 koku; age 24.
8. Horibe Yahei Kanamaru 堀部弥兵衛金丸, Edo representative, retired (*Edo rusu[i]* *inkyō* 江戸留主[守居]隱居): 150 koku; age 76.
9. Tomimori Sukeemon 富森助右衛門, horseman (*umamawari* 馬廻り): 200 koku; age 33.
10. Chikamatsu Kanroku 近松勘六, horseman: 250 koku; age 33.
11. Ushioda Matanojō 潮田又之丞, horseman: 200 koku; age 33.
12. Akagaki Genzō 赤垣源藏,⁸⁷ idem: 200 koku; age 31.
13. Okuda Magodayū 奥田孫大[太]夫, idem: 150 koku; age 56.
14. Yada Gorōemon 矢田五郎右衛門, idem: 200 koku; age 29.
15. Ōishi Sezaemon 大石瀬左衛門, idem: 150 koku; age 27.
16. Hayami Tōzaemon 早水藤左衛門, idem: 150 koku; age 29.
17. Hazama Jūbyōe 間重兵衛,⁸⁸ idem: 150 koku; age 56.

Lord Matsudaira Oki no kami 松平隠岐守⁸⁹ had the custody of the following ten samurai:

1. Ōishi Chikara Yoshikane 大石主税ヨシカネ[良金], heir (*heyazumi* 部屋住); age 16.
2. Horibe Yasubyōe 堀部安兵衛: 200 koku; age 33.
3. Nakamura Kansuke 中村勘介[助], registrar (*shoyaku* 書役): 100 koku; age 47.
4. Kimura Okaemon 木村岡右衛門, horseman: 150 koku; age 45.
5. Sugaya Hanojō 菅谷半之丞, spearman (*yari* 鎧): 100 koku; age 44.
6. Fuwa Kazuemon 生波[不破]数右衛門, construction magistrate (*fushin bugyō* 普請奉行): 100 koku; age 33.
7. Ōtaka Gengo 大高源五,⁹⁰ attendant (*kinju* 近習): 50 koku; age 31.

⁸⁶ Norinaga inserted the additional names “Fujiwara no Yoshio 藤原ヨシヲ,” a reference to Kuranosuke’s (supposed) lineage name Fujiwara and his given name Yoshio 良雄.

⁸⁷ Norinaga mistook Akabane 赤埴 for “Akagaki,” an error that was widespread and later became fixed in *kōdan* storytelling.

⁸⁸ Hazama’s name was Kihyōe 喜兵衛; the characters 喜 and 重 have been confused.

⁸⁹ Matsudaira (Hisamatsu 久松 branch) Sadanao 定直 (1660–1720) was daimyo of Matsuyama 松山 (present-day Ehime prefecture), 150,000 koku.

⁹⁰ Norinaga inserted the reading “Takao” タカヲ next to Gengo, probably an (erroneous) reference to Ōtaka’s given name, Tadao 忠雄.

8. Kaiga Yazaemon 貝賀弥左衛門: 10 ryō, 3 *nin-fuchi*; age 56.
9. Chidori Saburobei 千鳥[馬]三郎兵衛:⁹¹ horseman: 100 koku; age 53.
10. Okano Kin'emon 岡野金右衛門: 200 koku; age 23.

Lord Mōri Kai no kami 毛利甲斐守⁹² had the custody of the following ten samurai:

1. Onodera Kōemon 小野寺幸右衛門 (younger brother of [Ōtaka] Gengo): 5 *nin-fuchi*; age 27.
2. Kurahashi Densuke 倉橋伝助, attendant: 1 *nin-fuchi*, 20 koku; age 33.
3. Okajima Yasoemon 岡嶋弥惣[八十]右衛門: 20 koku, 5 *nin-fuchi*; age 37.
4. Yoshida Sawaemon 吉田沢右衛門, heir of Chūzaemon:⁹³ age 28.
5. Muramatsu Kihyōe 村松喜兵衛, magistrate of stipends (*fuchikata bugyō* 扶持方奉行): 25 koku, 5 *nin-fuchi*; age 61.
6. Kataoka Shinroku 片岡新六:⁹⁴ age 28.
7. Takebayashi Tadashichi 武林唯七, attendant: 10 ryō, 3 *nin-fuchi*; age 31.
8. Sugino Jūheiji 杉野十平次, attendant: 8 ryō, 3 *nin-fuchi*; age 27.
9. Maebara Isuke 前原伊介[助], magistrate of money (*kane bugyō*): 10 ryō, 3 *nin-fuchi*; age 39.
10. Katsuda Shin'emon 勝田新右衛門, keeper of the seals (*fuda yokome* 札横目): 10 ryō, 3 *nin-fuchi*; age 23.

Lord Mizuno Kenmotsu 水野監物⁹⁵ had custody of the following eight samurai:⁹⁶

1. Mase Magokurō 間瀬孫九郎, son of Kyūdayū: age 23.
2. Yatō Emoshichi 矢頭右衛門七, son of Chōsuke 長助: age 17.
3. Okuda Sadaemon 奥田定[貞]右衛門, son of Magodayū: age 25.
4. Kayano Wasuke 菅の[茅野]和介[助]: 7 ryō, 3 *nin-fuchi*, age 37.
5. Muramatsu Sandayū 村松三大[太]夫, son of Kihyōe: age 27.
6. Hazama Jūjirō 間十次郎, son of Jūbyōe: age 26.
7. Tomibayashi Sukenoshin 富林助之進:⁹⁷ 7 ryō, 4 *nin-fuchi*; age 37.
8. Kanzaki Yogorō Noriyasu 神崎与五郎[則休]: 7 ryō, 4 *nin-fuchi*; age 38.

⁹¹ Norinaga mistook Chiba 千馬 (read Senba by some) for Chidori, a confusion of the characters 馬 and 鳥.

⁹² Mōri Tsunamoto 毛利綱元 (1650–1709) was daimyo of Chōfu 長府 (present-day Yamaguchi prefecture), 50,000 koku.

⁹³ Chūzaemon is miswritten “Chūemon 忠右衛門.” Chūzaemon was in the first group, in the custody of the Hosokawa.

⁹⁴ This must be Hazama 間 Shinroku, the son of Kihyōe (Jūbyōe; number 17 of the first group) and younger brother of Jūjirō (in the fourth group, in the custody of the Mizuno).

⁹⁵ Mizuno Tadayuki 水野忠之 (1669–1731) was daimyo of Okazaki 岡崎 (present-day Aichi prefecture), 50,000 koku.

⁹⁶ There were in fact nine of the Akō rōnin in custody at the Mizuno mansion; see the following note.

⁹⁷ This name is perplexing, since it does not correspond to any known Akō retainer (although it seems closest to Tomimori Sukeemon, who appears above in the leadership group), and bears no resemblance to either of the two names that are missing here from the Mizuno group, Yokogawa Kanpei and Mimura Jirōzaemon 三村次郎左衛門. The stipend (7 ryō, 4 *nin-fuchi*) and age of 37, as well as the place on the list, would seem to correspond better to Yokogawa (6 ryō, 3 *nin-fuchi*, age 37) than to Mimura (also age 37, with a stipend of 6 koku in *kirimai* 切米, and 2 *nin-fuchi*).

Palanquins came from the houses of custody to receive the forty-six.⁹⁸ When Lord Inaba Hōki no kami 稲葉伯耆守⁹⁹ was asked how they should be treated, he said that since the men were not charged with serious crimes, the lords should treat them as they saw fit, and offer them proper meals (*nijūgosai* 二汁五菜) in the morning and the evening. All forty-six samurai were ordered to submit lists of their relatives for official inspection, to be turned over to the bakufu by the houses of custody. Those who had been part of the conspiracy but who defected were:¹⁰⁰ Nakamura Toshinosuke 中村利介 [Nakata Riheiiji 中田理平次], Yano Isuke 矢野伊介, Nakamura Seiemon 中村清右衛門, Seno Mago[za]emon 瀬尾孫右[左]衛門, Suzuki Jūhachirō 鈴木重八郎 [Suzuta Jūhachi 鈴木重八], Oyamada Shō[za]emon 小山田庄右[左]衛門, Tanaka Sadashirō 田中定[貞]四郎, and Mōri Koheiji [Koheita] 毛利小平次 [小平太].

⁹⁸ The preceding list contains only forty-five names, because of the omission of one from the final group.

⁹⁹ This must refer to Inaba Masayuki 稲葉正住 (1640–1715), daimyo of Sakura 佐倉 (present-day Chiba prefecture). He was the bakufu senior councilor (*rōjū* 老中) in charge at the time of the attack on Kira. His title, however, was Tango no kami 丹後守, not Hōki no kami.

¹⁰⁰ Corrections of the numerous errors in this list are shown in brackets.